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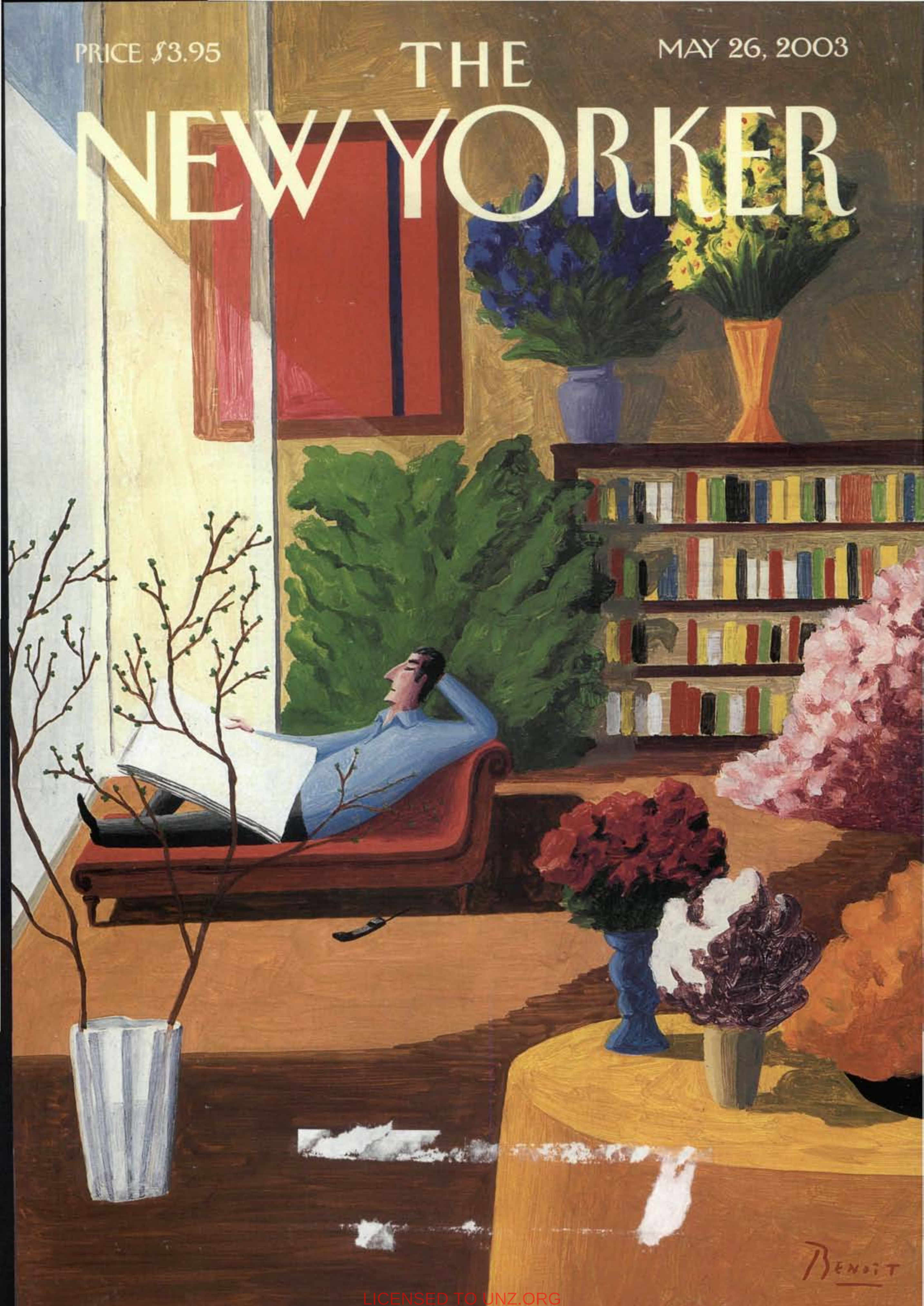
THE NEW YORKER

MAY 26, 2003



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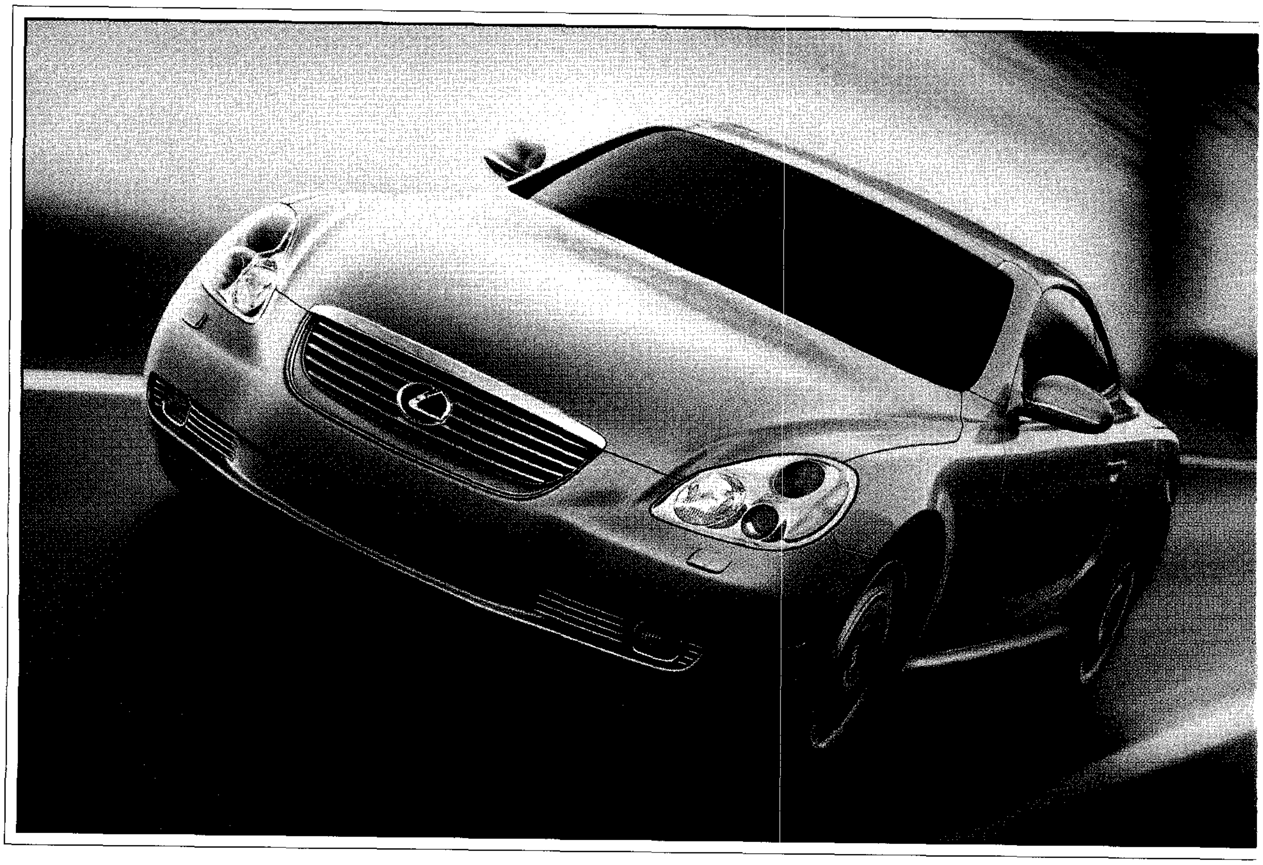

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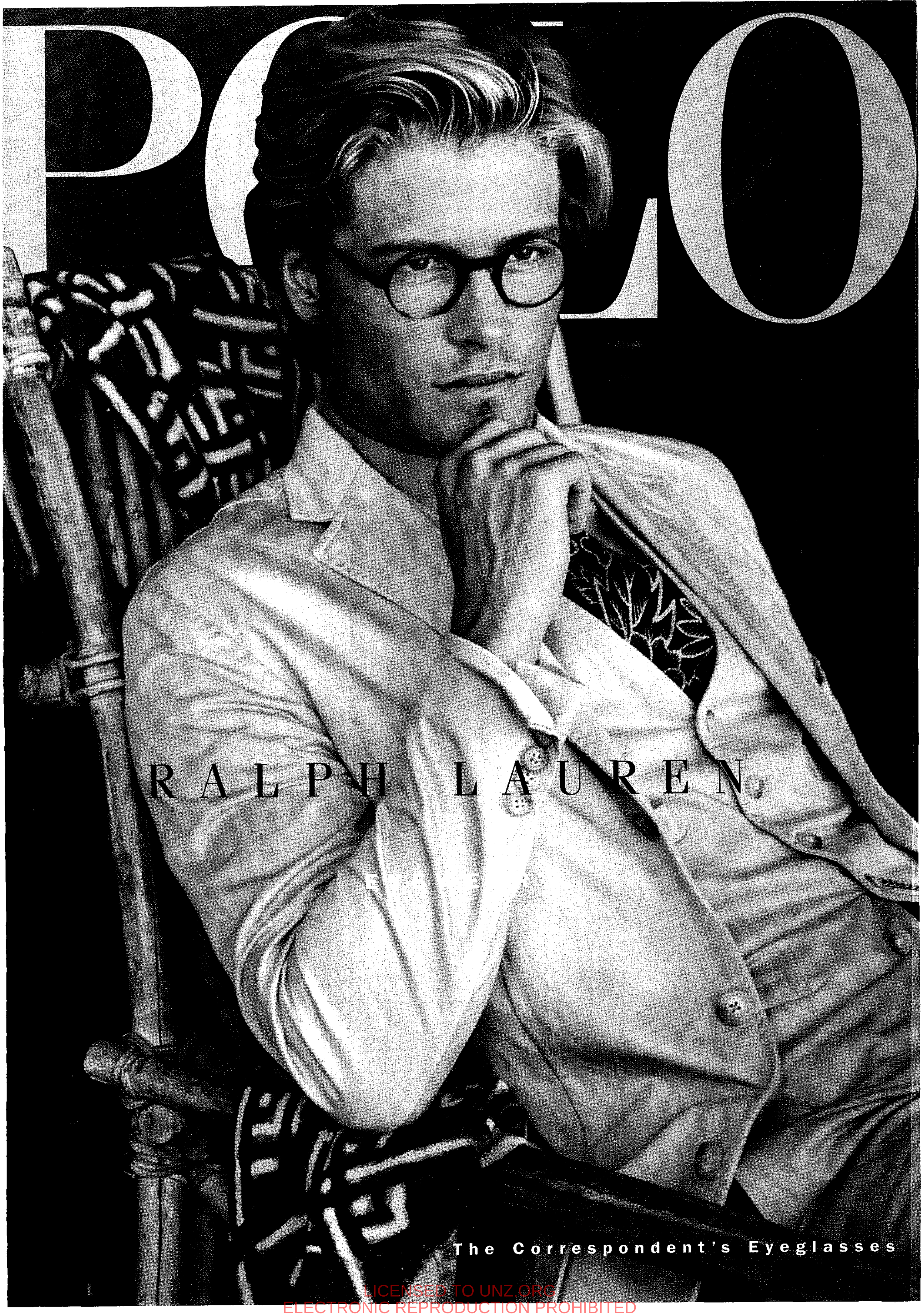
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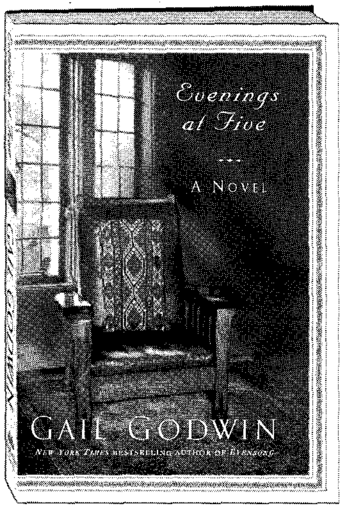

Evenings at Five

A NOVEL

GAIL GODWIN

"A tender story of a relationship that defies the grave."
—*The New York Times Book Review*

"*Evenings at Five* reads like a novel, but it's a fictionalization of a real event. Gail Godwin uses all the weapons of art to deal with her own all-too-real grief, and the result is a rigorous exercise in restraint, control, irony, memory."
—Carolyn See, *The Washington Post*

Deseret News

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CONTRIBUTORS

Ken Auletta ("Vox Fox," p. 58) writes the magazine's Annals of Communications. A collection of his media pieces, "Backstory: Inside the Business of News," will be published in the fall.

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Bruce McCall (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 49) has a new humor collection, "All Meat Looks Like South America," which comes out later this year.

Larissa MacFarquhar ("The Strongman," p. 50) has been writing for the magazine since 1998.

Jayanta Mahapatra (Poem, p. 88) is a physicist and the author of numerous collections of poems, including "Burden of Waves and Fruit."

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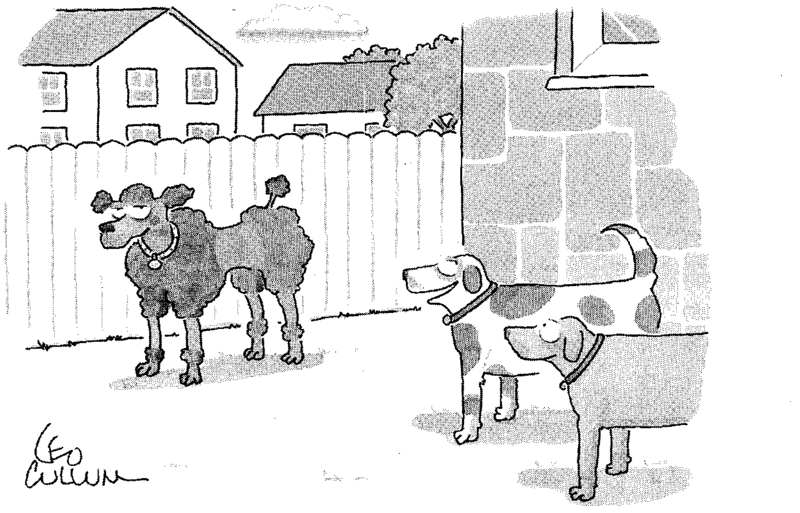
Roger Angell ("Romance," p. 74) is a fiction editor at the magazine. His book "Game Time: A Baseball Companion" was published in April.

Roz Chast (Sketchbook, p. 80) is the author of several books of illustrations, including "Weird and Wonderful Words."

James Wood (Books, p. 90) is a senior editor at *The New Republic*. His novel "The Book Against God" will be published next month.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 98) writes a regular column on television. ♦



"I'm about ready to forgive the French."

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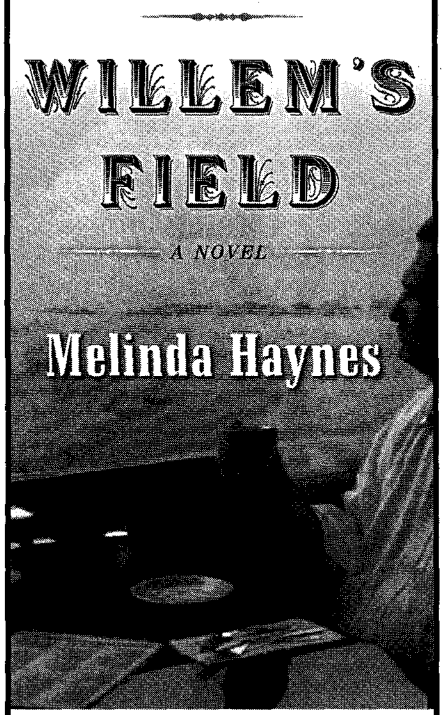
New York

What are the limitations of what we do and don't know about our own hearts?



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—*San Francisco Chronicle Book Review*

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THE MAIL

THE BANANA BUDGET

John Cassidy, after quoting some harsh words from an International Monetary Fund official on the U.S. budget deficit, observes, "When I.M.F. types start talking about the United States as if it were a banana republic on a bad day, it's probably time to change course" (The Talk of the Town, May 12th). The prototypical banana republic offers another parallel as well. In poor countries with extreme inequalities of income and wealth, powerful groups can refuse to bear their share of the tax burden for maintaining public services, social programs, and the military. Raising revenues through borrowing rather than through taxation is an easy way out for governments in this situation. This aptly describes what is happening in the U.S. Income and wealth inequality have increased steadily in the past decade, while federal support for social programs has decreased. Bush's irresponsible tax cuts, combined with his costly overseas aspirations, are poised to do irreparable harm to America's economy and to our way of life.

Drucilla K. Barker
Professor of Economics, Hollins University
Roanoke, Va.

MAKING THE CITY PAY

Jeffrey Toobin's article revealed a sordid area of the legal system, in which a gang member with a Tec-9 machine gun can open fire on an off-duty police officer and then argue—successfully—that the injuries he received when the officer shot back entitle him to a jury award of seventy-six million dollars ("Payday," April 21st & 28th). Such outrageous awards are a threat to the economic vitality and, indeed, viability of cities like New York. Clearly, there should be limits on what suits a criminal can bring for actions that resulted from his crime. But jurors also need a lesson in where all that money comes from, and the effect that its loss will have on their communities. When there are no restraints on juries, recklessness takes over.

John Oser
Sandwich, Mass.

Toobin's account of Mayor Bloomberg's plan to limit the right to a civil jury trial was disappointing. New tort claims against the city are not skyrocketing; if costs have increased, it is, in large part, because the city is finally paying off the backlog of claims that past mayors allowed to pile up. Bloomberg may have curbed that habit, but his answer is to make victims pay. And torts are about victims: babies brain-damaged at city hospitals, children poisoned by lead paint in city housing, and others hurt by city negligence. Toobin notes that the city only recently created a unit to study how it can learn from accidents and prevent injuries. The city should figure out what it is doing wrong—and try to fix it—before it restricts the ability of victims to obtain justice. The rights of vulnerable citizens should not be sacrificed to pay for the city's mistakes and wrongdoing.

Jeffrey A. Lichtman, President
New York State Trial Lawyers Association
New York City

NO. 1 FANS

Roger Angell, in his essay on San Francisco's Pacific Bell Park, rightly gives Peter Magowan and his partners credit for taking on the park's three-hundred-and-sixty-million-dollar cost (Sketchbook, May 12th). But he is wrong to say that "the fans" rejected the idea of a publicly funded ballpark in several referenda. In fact, it was "the voters" who defeated it—and those two groups, sadly, differed. After the decision was made to build a privately financed ballpark, thousands of fans contributed early and generously by buying charter seat licenses, insuring lifetime rights to premier spots in what is, as Angell writes, "the best address in baseball."

Susan Taishoff
Saratoga, Calif.

•

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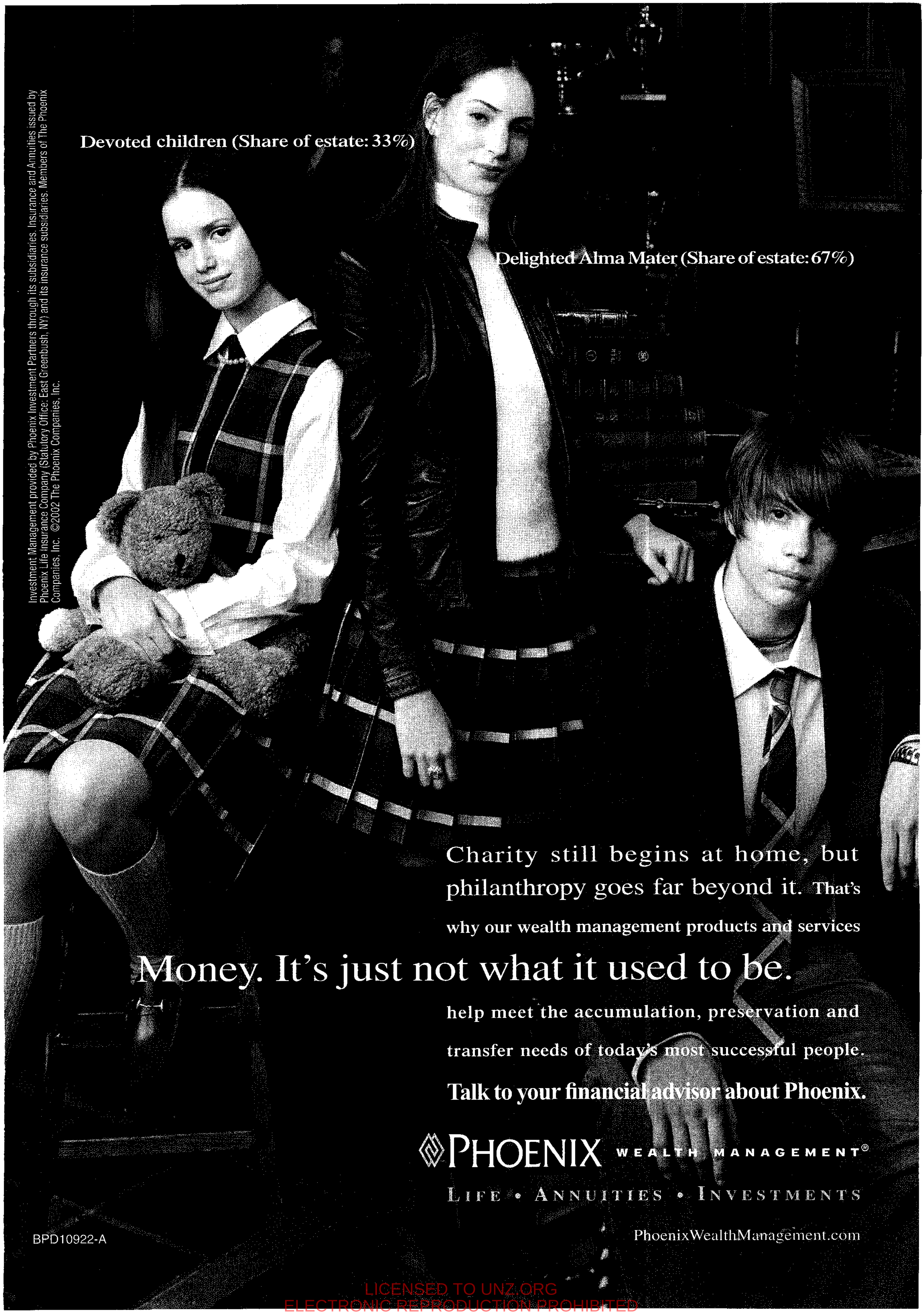
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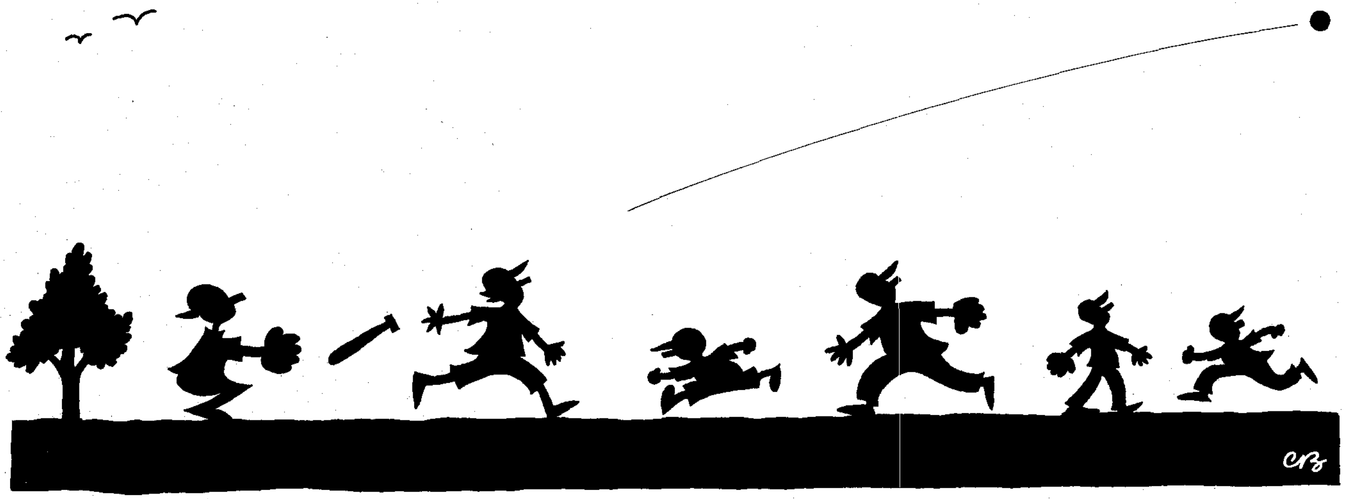
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

A BAD FRIEND
In a new play by Jules Feiffer, set during the McCarthy era, members of a Brooklyn family suffer for their Communist Party ties. Larry Bryggman, David Harbour, and Mark Feuerstein lead the cast. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

EPIC THEATRE CENTER
Two plays about rich kids and poor kids in repertory at Theatre 3. Ibsen's "Little Eyolf" was adapted and directed by Ron Russell. Previews begin May 25. "Habitat," a new play by the Canadian playwright Julia Gibson, who directs, looks at what happens when troubled teens move into a wealthy neighborhood. In previews. Opens May 22 at 8. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-206-1515.)

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Jefferson Mays stars in a new play by Doug Wright ("Quills"), directed by Moisés Kaufman, based on the life of a German transvestite named Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, who managed to avoid persecution under both Nazi and Communist regimes. In previews. Opens May 27 at 7. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

LAST DANCE
In a new play by Marsha Norman, presented by Manhattan Theatre Club, an American poet living in the South of France is beset by hangers-on. JoBeth Williams and James Barbour lead the cast. Directed by Lynne Meadow. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

MASTER HAROLD . . . AND THE BOYS
Danny Glover returns to Broadway in a revival of Athol Fugard's 1982 play about a white South African boy's friendship with two black servants. Directed by Lonny Price (who played the boy back in 1982). With Michael Boatman and Christopher Denham. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

MONDO DRAMA
The Drama Dept. presents a new comedy by Douglas Carter Beane ("As Bees in Honey Drown"), a sendup of nineteen-sixties shockumentaries that stars the standup comic and talk-show host Caroline Rhea. Directed by Christopher Ashley. In previews. Opens May 22 at 7. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

WHOSE FAMILY VALUES!
The question of whether life begins at conception or at birth is taken on in a new family drama by Richard Abrons, directed by Philip Rose. One preview on May 21. Opens May 22 at 8. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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25	26	27				

OPENED RECENTLY

CAVEDWELLER
Michael Greif directs a new play by Kate Moira Ryan, who adapted it from Dorothy Allison's 1998 novel. (Reviewed in this issue.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Closes June 1.)

A DAY IN THE DEATH OF JOE EGG
In the Roundabout's revival of Peter Nichols's 1967 play, the unreliable narrator, Bri—a droll, bored schoolteacher, is brought to magnificent life by the comedian Eddie Izzard, who treats the audience as if it were his rowdy classroom and chases his sweet-natured wife, Sheila (the expert Victoria Hamilton), around the sofa in vain pursuit of a little rumpy-pumpy. Bri's jollity has a manic, almost slapstick edge, but when the doorbell rings and the couples' brain-damaged daughter enters, or, rather, is wheeled in, the smile is wiped off the audience's face. Directed by Laurence Boswell. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/14/03.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. Closes June 1.)

GYPSY
Bernadette Peters's performance as Mama Rose is a marvel, a startling reinvention of the musical warhorse created by Arthur Laurents, Jule Styne, and Stephen Sondheim. Other Mamas—such as Rosalind Russell and Ethel Merman—spotlighted Rose's resentments, but Peters humanizes the character, making her vulnerable and occasionally decent. Instead of competing with her two daughters, she is visibly delighted when they tear up the stage. Heather Tepe, as the preteen "Dainty June," sings and dances with captivating hysteria, and Addison Timlin plays her dreamy, slow-moving sister, Louise. As the grownup Louise, who becomes the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, Tammy Blanchard is a coquette, but a nice one. The director Sam Mendes has treated the show more as a play with music than as a musical. The actors don't ingratiate themselves with the audience or try to knock their socks off; Mendes wants the audience to think instead—perhaps too much—about the world he has created for the characters. (5/12/03) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

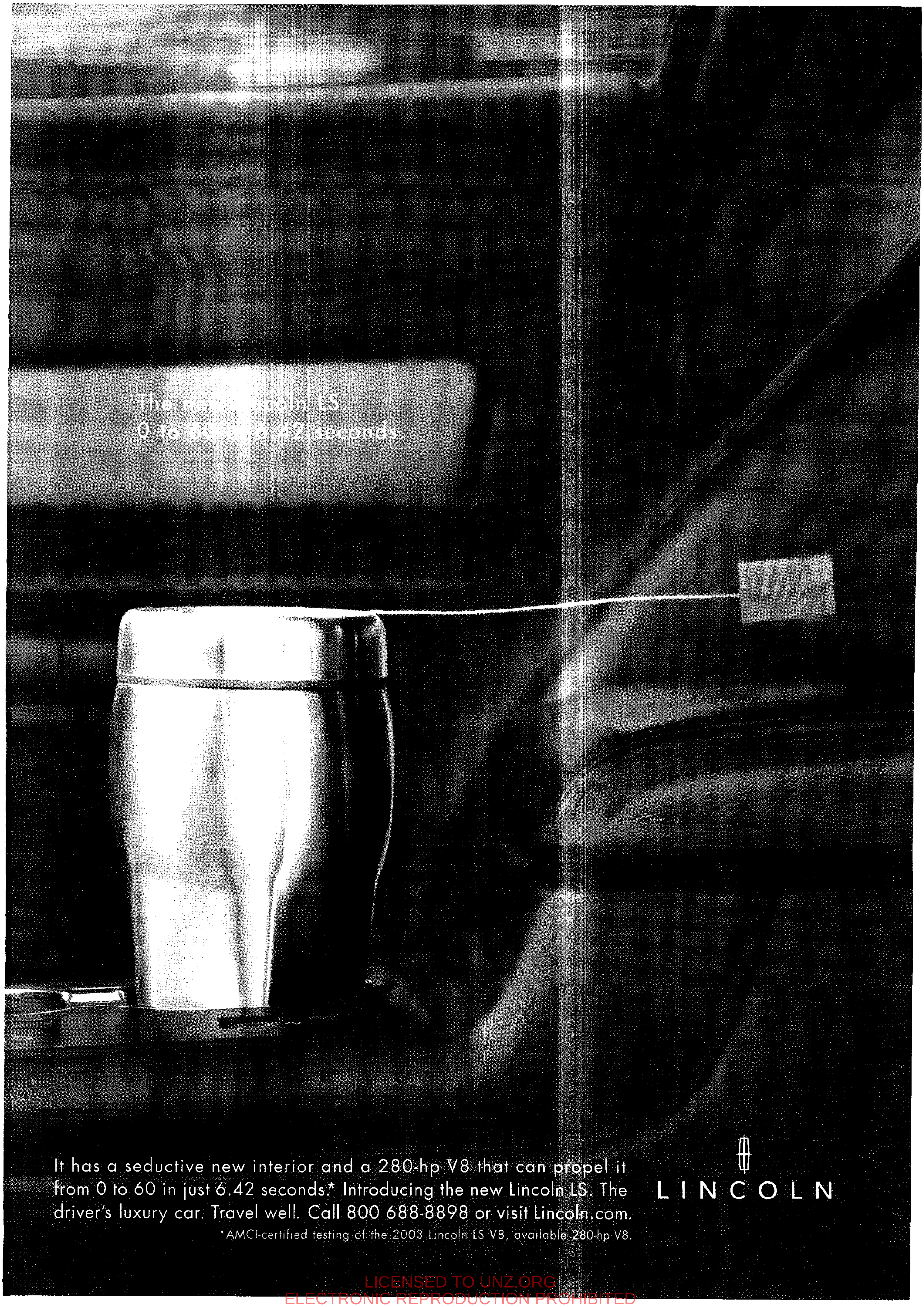
HUMBLE BOY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the American première of a play by Charlotte Jones, loosely based on "Hamlet" and set in Cambridge, England. Blair Brown, as Flora Humble, and Jared Harris, as her son, Felix, lead the cast, which also includes Mary Beth Hurt and Paul Hecht. Directed by John Caird. Sets and costumes by Tim Hatley. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
The invention of the writer-performer Justin Bond and the pianist Kenny Mellman, Kiki and Herb have long been fixtures at downtown venues like Flamingo East, P.S. 122, and Fez. In a scorched-earth advance across decades of pop music, from Bob Merrill's "Make Yourself Comfortable" to Kylie Minogue's "Can't Get You Out of My Head," they have refined their act into a slashingly funny, psychically unsettling entertainment—part cabaret, part rock and roll, part Victorian melodrama—to which the category of camp does not apply. The opulently dissipated Kiki DuRane—a sixty-something lounge singer who tours ad nauseam with a doleful accompanist named Herb, is a beacon of insanity in a world that may finally be coming around to her point of view. Directed by Scott Elliott. (5/19/03) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200.)

KOLTÈS NEW YORK 2003
Four plays by the French writer Bernard Marie Koltès, who died of AIDS in Paris in 1989, at the age of forty-one, have been translated into English and play in repertory throughout the month of May at the Ohio Theatre. Titles include "West Pier," "Roberto Zucco," "Battle of Black and Dogs," and "In the Solitude of Cotton Fields." (66 Wooster St. 212-966-4844. Through May 31.)

THE LADIES OF THE CORRIDOR
A remarkable 1953 play by Dorothy Parker and Arnaud d'Usseau, revived by the Peccadillo Theatre Company, proves that Parker was the mistress of much more than the acid one-liner. The drama unfolds in a hotel not unlike the Algonquin, where six discarded women live in not so quiet desperation. Peggy Cowles gives a gripping performance as a genteel matron who blackmails her middle-aged son into living with her, Patricia Randell is riveting as an alcoholic wife who fled her philandering husband, and Susan Jeffries is painful to watch, but excellent, as a widow who ruins a romance with a much younger man—well played by Kelly AuCoin. All the actors are strong; it's a testament to their powers that the apricot poodle, Sassy, doesn't steal the show. Directed with Mankiewicz flair by Dan Wackerman. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-561-9635. Closes May 25.)

LIFE (X) 3
The monstrous is given an altogether upbeat French bourgeois touch in Yasmina Reza's slick new play, a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LINCOLN

ninety-minute field day of gleeful malevolence in which three possible scenarios of bad behavior at a failed dinner party play out, to no apparent point. The excellent cast includes Helen Hunt, Brent Spiner, Linda Emond, and John Turturro. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT
In a stately and compelling production at the Plymouth, Eugene O'Neill's masterpiece has been superbly revived, bringing O'Neill's own spectral, heartbroken family—"the four haunted Tyrones," he called them—to the stage. Vanessa Redgrave and Brian Dennehy play Mary and James Tyrone, and Philip Seymour Hoffman and Robert Sean Leonard are their sons, Jamie and Edmund. The director, Robert Falls, seems mostly to have stayed out of the way of his A-list actors. Since he has chosen, perhaps unwisely, to stage the play uncut, there are inevitable longueurs, but no moment onstage is unexplored, and almost no choice is indulgent. Redgrave, lyrical and feral, moves like a trapped animal in a cage of her own choosing, and her natural reserve adds to the paradoxical quality of Mary's detachment, her absent presence. Dennehy, a powerhouse with a matinée idol's rugged profile, makes James's bog-Irish roots immediately credible, and his burly and bombastic presence anchors the play in its climate of disappointment. A few incidents—Edmund's fight with Jamie, Jamie's drunken confession of envy of his brother (Hoffman's toxic sorrow kicks the play onto a completely new emotional level), and Mary's final aria—pack an unforgettable wallop. (5/19/03) (236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LOOK OF LOVE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a song cycle masquerading as a musical that canters through twenty-nine numbers from the Hal David–Burt Bacharach easy-listening catalogue. Nine singers clamor around the high-tech parabolas of Derek McLane's set in an evening that offers no narrative, no characterization, no playfulness, no penetration, and, finally, no reason for anyone to turn up. (Just put on a Dionne Warwick cassette instead, and kick back at home.) Directed by Scott Ellis and choreographed by Ann Reinking. (5/19/03) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

MESHUGAH
Naked Angels present a new play by Emily Mann, based on the novel by Isaac Bashevis Singer, about a love triangle among Jewish émigrés in Manhattan in the nineteen-fifties. Directed by Loretta Greco. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MOLLY'S DREAM
Daniel Aukin directs a play with music by Maria Irene Fornes, about a waitress whose encounter with a stranger spurs a fantastical dream. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-868-4444.)

NINE
In this elegant revival of Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston's 1982 musical—an adaptation of Fellini's "8½"—Antonio Banderas plays Guido Contini, a film director whose genius is inextricable from his childlike narcissism. Good-looking, confident, and amusing, Banderas has a European restraint that only magnifies his passionate nature. He doesn't have to strain to make the audience believe that he is catnip to women. He also has a fine voice. The other characters are satellites around Planet Guido: his put-upon wife (Mary Stuart Masterson), his battle-axe producer (Chita Rivera), and his tenacious and lubricious mistress, Carla (Jane Krakowski), who descends semi-nude from the rafters. Directed by David Leveaux, with a high-tech set (featuring an impressive spiral staircase) by Scott Pask. (4/21 & 28/03) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND
In an engrossing revival of Eric Bogosian's one-act play "Notes from Underground," the comic writer and talker-about-town Jonathan Ames gives John Malkovich a run for his money as the possessor of the creepiest voice in show biz. Ames journeys from self-absorption to insanity in seventy-five minutes, beginning as a harmless loner and ending as a garbage-sifting child abductor. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288. Closes May 25.)

Stew, at Joe's Pub (see Night Life).

MICHAEL WELDON

THE PLAY WHAT I WROTE
This sketch-comedy soufflé, starring the British comedy team Sean Foley and Hamish McColl, with Toby Jones as their hilarious gofer, Arthur, is a goofy tribute to the English double act Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise. The show was a hit in London, but to American audiences unfamiliar with the departed duo, the soufflé sags a bit, although it offers plenty of lighthearted tidbits to savor. The gimmick is that each night Arthur lassos a big star to act with McColl in a play-within-the-play called "A Tight Squeeze for the Scarlet Pimple." Glenn Close, Roger Moore, and Liam Neeson are among the stars who have joined in the frolic thus far. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

RAIN DANCE
The Signature Theatre Company presents the New York première of a new play by Lanford Wilson, set in Los Alamos, New Mexico, in 1945, on the eve of the creation of the atom bomb. The cast includes Randolph Mantooth, Suzanne Regan, James Van Der Beek, and Harris Yulin. Guy Sanville directs. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

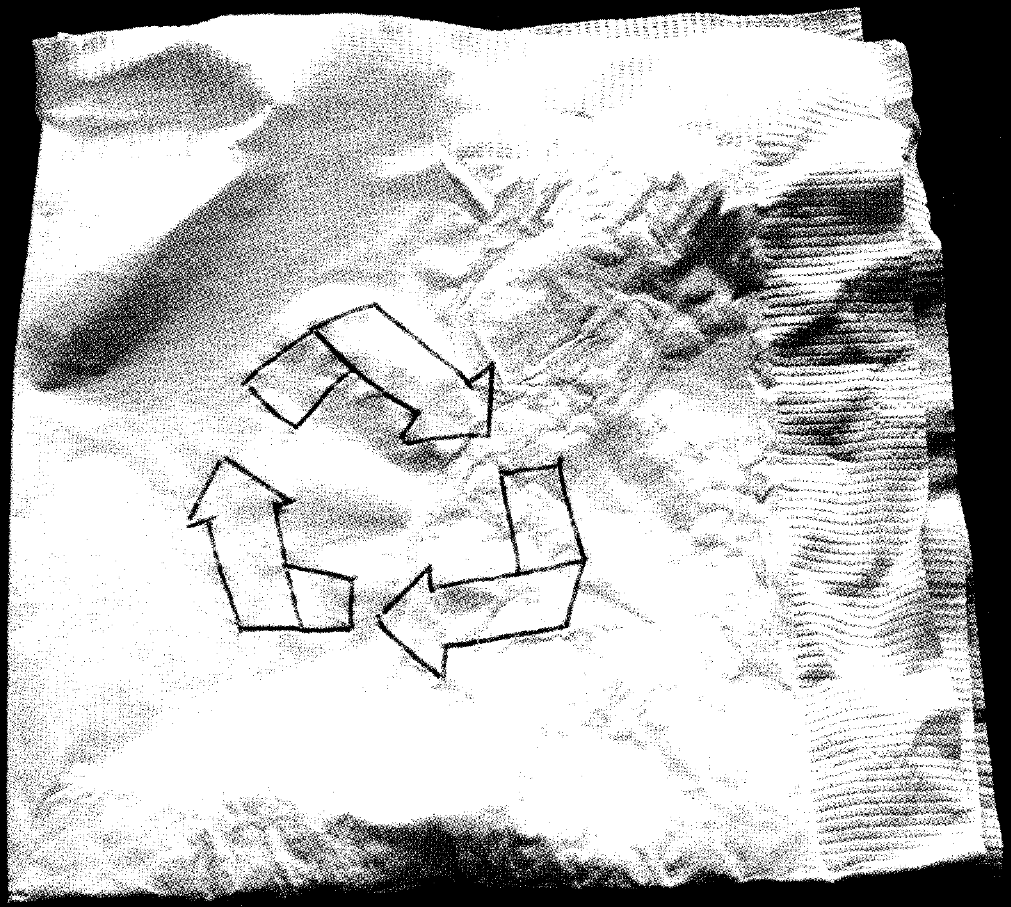
ROMOLA AND NIJINSKY
In Lynne Alvarez's play about an unusual courtship and its aftermath, Romola loves Nijinsky and Nijinsky loves love. He also loves Tolstoy and Russia and Diaghilev and God, but above all, he loves dance, and when he sees that his Hungarian bride, Romola de Pulsky (Kelly Hutchinson)—a member of the corps de ballet of the Ballets Russes—will never pull off a plié like Pavlova's, he breaks down completely. David Barlow, as Nijinsky, conveys his collapse with both his body and his face: his legs coil with the energy of a tiger preparing to pounce, while his eyes hold the stricken innocence of a faun. The two ballerinas in the cast, Michelle Lookadoo and Laura Martin, help illustrate Nijinsky's emotional state, extending their toes to pinpoint the dancer's fraying nerves. Directed by David Levine, with imaginative choreography by Robert La Fosse. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 212-333-4052. Closes June 1.)

TRUMBO
The life of the blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter Dalton Trumbo is recapped in a staged reading performed by alternating Trumbos (Tim Robbins, Chris Cooper, Alec Baldwin, and others), and by Paul Giamatti as Trumbo's son, Christopher. What comes across in this powerful evening is the eloquence, wit, curmudgeonly stubbornness, and downright bravery of an uncompromising soul. Directed by Peter Askin. Mondays only. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200. Closes June 16.)

WRITER'S BLOCK
Woody Allen directs a double bill of his two new one-act comedies, "Riverside Drive" and "Old Saybrook," with an ensemble cast that includes Bebe Neuwirth, Paul Reiser, and Jay Thomas. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.
BARBRA'S WEDDING
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.
BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.
LA BOHÈME
Broadway, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.
CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.
DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.
DREAM A LITTLE DREAM
Village, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.
ENCHANTED APRIL
Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
THE EXONERATED
45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
GOLDA'S BALCONY
Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. (Closes June 1.)
HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.
THE LAST SUNDAY IN JUNE
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.
MAN OF LA MANCHA
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.
SALOME
Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.
SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.
TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.
TEA AT FIVE
Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.
THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.
URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.
A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD
Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.
ZANNA, DON'T!
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.



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DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The season continues. ♦ May 21 at 8: "Symphonic Dances," "Morphoses," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ May 22 at 8: "Symphonic Dances," "Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2," and "Carnival of the Animals." ♦ May 23 at 8 (an all-Robbins program): "Interplay," "Ives, Songs," and "In G Major." ♦ May 24 at 2, May 25 at 3, and May 27 at 7:30: "Coppélia." ♦ May 24 at 8: "Chaconne," "Morphoses," and "In G Major." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 28.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Sir Frederick Ashton's beloved 1960 reworking of the 1789 French ballet "La Fille Mal Gardée" incorporates Russian elements but derives its sweet charm from the English countryside. Lise loves Colas, a young farmer, but her widowed mother Simone (played by a clog-dancing man) wants her to marry a wealthy dolt. In Ashton's perfect balance of storytelling, comedy, and classical steps, the dancers cavort with ribbons and pitchforks and sticks and even dress up like chickens before Simone gives in to the wishes of her poorly supervised daughter. ♦ May 21 at 2 and 8 and May 22 at 8: "HereAfter." ♦ May 23 and May 26-27 at 8 and May 24 at 2 and 8: "La Fille Mal Gardée." (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. Through June 28.)

DANCEAFRICA 2003
This year's DanceAfrica festival has assembled traditions from Haiti, West Africa, Brazil, Cuba, and North America in a weekend-long celebration. Port-au-Prince's Resurrection Dance Theatre—made up of dancers who started out in a home for disadvantaged boys—presents "Neg Mawon," the story of a successful slave revolt, and "Dance of a New Life," about a member who turned his physical disability into a creative asset. Philadelphia's Kulu Mele Dance Ensemble performs "Fula Fare," a West African dance of the Fulani people that celebrates the seventh day of a newborn's life, and Chicago's Muntu Dance Theatre explores traditional Guinean drum rhythms: welcoming and celebratory beats (*djagbe*), initiation-rite beats (*mendiani*), and warrior beats (*sofa*) in "Djimbe Drum Talk." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 23 at 7:30, May 24 at 2 and 7:30, and May 25 at 3. For complete festival schedule, please call the box office.)

"AFROFUTURISTIC"
Tracie Morris, a Nuyorican Poets Café Grand Slam champion, has woven her rhymes into music and has written lyrics for the choreographer Ralph Lemon. Not until now, though, has she tried to bust a move herself. In "Afrofuturistic," Morris takes the stage with David Thomson to groove through several visions of the future, as she chants a densely allusive text that incorporates papal dispensations, James Brown, and the TV show "Bewitched." With live electronica and world-beat music by Graham Haynes, played by a seven-piece band. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. May 21-24 at 8.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP
In his latest evening-length work, "Just Two Dancers," the skinny, doleful John Jasperse and his statuesque company member Juliette Mapp mirror each other's arm and leg movements from opposite ends of the theatre's broad stage. Across the void, they hold each other's gaze with defiant intensity. Jasperse uses ingenious architectural structures to push the audience's tolerance for suspense and voyeurism to the breaking point (it would be unfair to give away just how). The wait is worth it. When the two finally meet face to face, hooking fingers, their bodies wracked by tension, their palpable need and revulsion are funny, disgusting, and fascinating. (Bessie Schönberg Theatre, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 22-25 at 7. Through June 8.)

DANCEBRAZIL
The company's one-week season at the Joyce includes last year's "Canavial," which uses the *maculelê* stick dance—from the sugarcane plantations of Brazil—and a new work by the artistic director, Jelon Vieira, called "Missão" ("Mission"), which fuses capoeira and dance to express the energy and focus required to achieve a personal goal. (175 Eighth Ave. at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 20 at 7:30, May 21-24 at 8, and May 25 at 2 and 7:30.)

"1945: SA COIA (A SARDINIAN TALE)"
A wedding is tainted by scandal in a dance-theatre drama set in Guspini, Sardinia, at the end of the Second World War, which includes video footage of Guspini and interviews with local survivors of the war. Directed by Guido Tuveri and performed by his Sanza Nemo Collective. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. May 22-25 at 8.)

JENNIFER MULLER/THE WORKS
In place of what would be her twenty-eighth season, the choreographer presents one gala evening with three premières—"Moon," "Bounce," and "Prayer"—and a preview of a work in progress, "Door," about a man who doesn't want to leave his room. In "Moon," Muller interprets seven versions of the Richard Rodgers standard "Blue Moon" (she weeded them out of eighty), in styles that range from doo-wop to Afro-Cuban. Her interpretations are fun and flirty, full of over-the-shoulder looks and beckoning arms, and the stage is busy with couples swinging into big lifts and low, low dips. In "Bounce," whenever a dancer leans, another runs in from the wings to support her. Two men dribble each other like basketballs, and the company plays off a giant trampoline propped on its side. (The New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. May 21 at 7:30.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

JAGUARES
One of Mexico's most popular rock bands, the Jaguares have a lead vocalist, Saul Hernandez, who explores issues of Mexican identity and iconography with intense passion. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. May 21 at 8.)

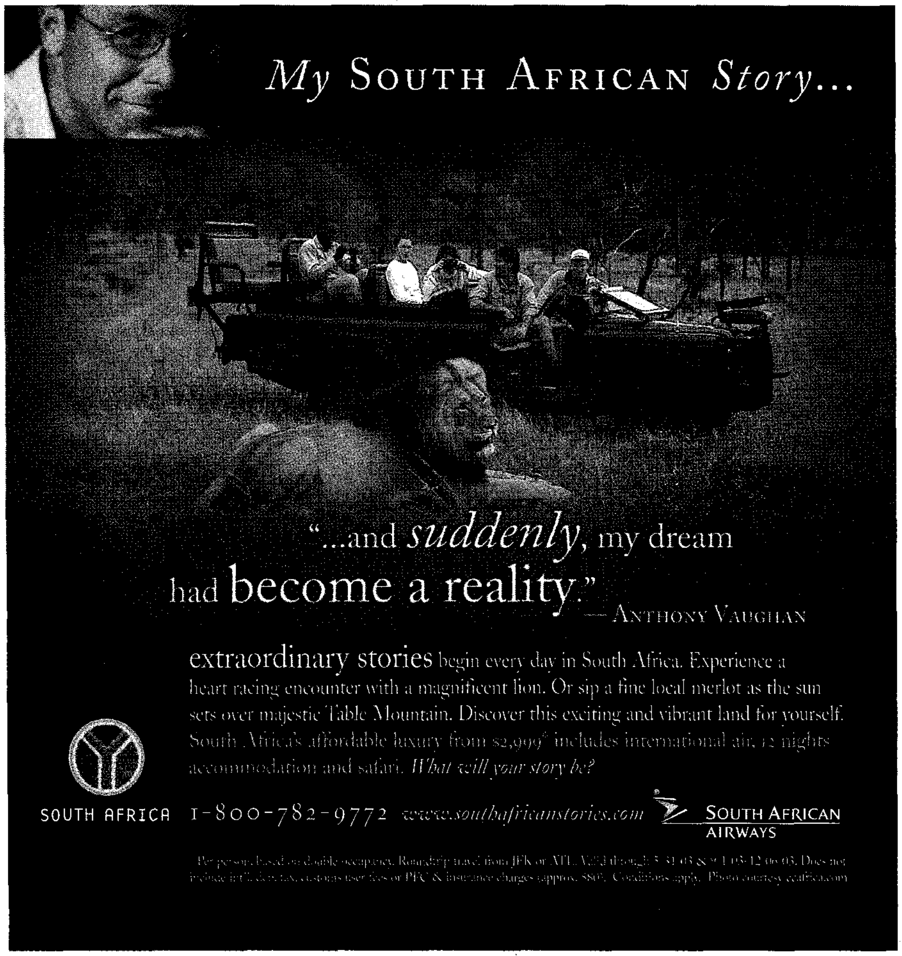
VISION FESTIVAL
This festival presents free jazz in all its diversity—at least four musical acts are featured each night, along with relevant film and dance programs. Highlights follow. May 21 at 11: Two sixties upstarts, the vocalist Patty Waters and the pianist Burton Greene, are joined by the bassist Mark Dresser. May 22 at 8:30: David S. Ware brings in his quartet. May 23 at 10:30: A power trio unites—the drummer Andrew Cyrille, the New Orleans saxophonist Kidd Jordan, and the bassist William Parker. May 24 at 9:30: The drummer Milford Graves and the German saxophonist Peter Brotzmann perform duets. May 25 at 11:30: John Zorn stops by with his Masada String Trio. The final evening, May 26, is dedicated to the late vocalist Jeanne Lee. (The Center, 268 Mulberry St. 212-473-0043. For more information, visit www.visionfestival.org.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Presenting a night of Persian classical music with the Dastan Ensemble and the vocalist Parisa. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536. May 23 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—May 22: **Meshuggah,** Swedish death-metal practitioners with a fondness for complicated, jazz-informed songs, lend credibility to a much maligned genre through their technical chops and musical adventurousness. Nonetheless, their unswerving allegiance to morbid subject matter and their growly vocals keep them firmly within the realm of the silly. May 23-25: The legendary R. & B. and blues vocalist **Etta James** may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POP NOTES

OLD DOGS, OLD TRICKS

Etta James's career kicked off with a woman's answer to a man's hit—"Roll with Me, Henry," which talked back to Hank Ballard's "Work with Me, Annie"—but these days she's enough of an institution that she doesn't bother rewriting lyrics: anything she touches becomes hers, as if by fiat. On **"Let's Roll"** (Private Music), she remakes Delbert McClinton's infidelity blues "Lie No Better" without changing the narrator's gender: the result is a particularly tangled psychodrama ("Honey, I smell some other man all over your cashmere sweater," she sings). James's tenth album in the last ten years, "Let's Roll" is the closest she's come to a bona-fide rock-and-soul record since the mid-seventies. "Someone to Love" moves along briskly on a Keith Richards-style riff, and "The Blues Is My Business" proves that her swagger is still intact. And "A Change Is Gonna Do Me Good" finds James, more than forty years after "At Last," still having her way with a heartsick ballad.

John Hiatt released the acoustic blues album "Crossing Muddy Waters" in 2000 and the rock album "The Tiki Bar Is Open" in 2001. **"Beneath This Gruff Exterior"** (New West) keeps the volume and the tempos up, thanks to Hiatt's longtime backing band the Goners, and especially the virtuosic slide guitarist Sonny Landreth, whose solos wind like a vine through the record. The music sounds flawless, but the songs don't measure up; too often, Hiatt surrenders to his inner lightweight, and only occasionally ("Circle Back," "Missing Pieces") does he display the weary sentimentality of his finest work.

After a mid-eighties splash that produced the hit "Jungle Boy" and had critics calling him the new Springsteen, the Virginia-born singer-songwriter John Eddie sank out of sight. Now he has resurfaced with **"Who the Hell Is John Eddie?"** (Lost Highway), an attempt to reclaim the larger audience he never quite had. While the mid-tempo songs are sometimes uncomfortably close to late-period Springsteen (the two have an almost identical sense of melody), Eddie hasn't lost his knack for bitterly funny roots rock. Near the end of the record, there's a pair of songs ("Forty," "Play Some Skynyrd") that directly address his could-have-been-a-contender status. Both teeter on the edge of self-pity but are rescued by wit and grit, and both are so autobiographical that it's hard to imagine anyone else singing them—except maybe Etta James.

—*Ben Greenman*

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have turned sixty-five this year, but, thankfully, she shows no sign of retiring. She's on the road in support of her latest album, "Let's Roll."

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—May 21: **Ian McCulloch,** the iconic front man of the British post-punk mainstays Echo & the Bunnymen. May 22: **They Might Be Giants.** The unapologetically quirky duo of John Flansburgh and John Linnell has been making willfully clever, skewed pop since the mid-eighties. This performance, which features such guests as Frank Black, Gordon Gano, and Syd Straw, celebrates the release of "Gigantic (A Tale of Two Johns)," a feature documentary about them. May 23: The noted producer **Daniel Lanois** stops by with songs from "Shine," his first solo album in a decade.

FEZ

380 Lafayette St. (212-533-7000)—May 21: The spunky local singer-songwriter **Bree Sharp,** who made a small splash a few years back with her ode to the former "X-Files" star David Duchovny. Also on May 21: **Greta Gertler,** an Australian expat who now lives in Brooklyn. She has a spacious voice and a welcome weakness for lushly orchestrated seventies-era singer-songwriter pop. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 20-21: An evening of beautiful contemporary folk with **Linda Thompson.** May 22: **Stew,** a raconteur and singer on leave from his Los Angeles power-pop outfit the Negro Problem, writes sophisticated songs that are not likely to be heard on the radio. Echoes of Cole Porter, Burt Bacharach, and Randy Newman can be heard in his work, which balances jokes about Che Guevara and easy drug references with stories of girls with "switchblade minds" and naked Dutch painters. He delivers his carefully detailed narratives in a hushed tone that quickly makes you feel like an insider in his "Afro-Baroque" world.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—May 23: The **Lilys.** On its new album, "Precollection," the British-rock-infatuated band opts not to investigate, say, Merseybeat, but instead it creates an amalgam of what is most likable about their own music—strummy guitars and dreamy but incisive vocals. May 24: The first annual **N.Y. Burlesque Festival** fills two floors with more than forty performers.

NORTHSIX

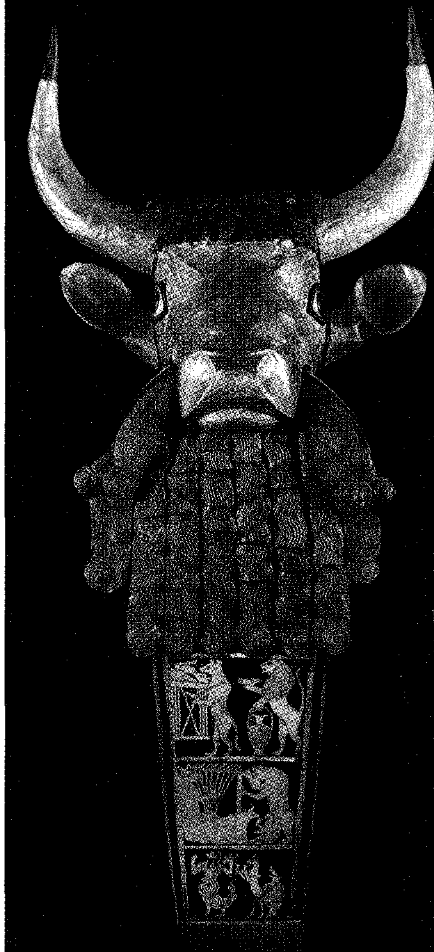
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—May 21: **Mars Volta.** Having disbanded their incendiary Texan indie-rock outfit At the Drive-In on the verge of mainstream success, the vocalist Cedric Bixler and the guitarist Omar Rodriguez (fans know them by their massive matching black manes) formed Mars Volta in order to continue their mission of rock apoplexy.

RODEO BAR

375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (212-683-6500)—May 22-23: **Cave Catt Sammy,** a gang of energetic San Antonians whose rockabilly takes listeners on a spin through the Eisenhower years.

SIN-É

150 Attorney St. (212-388-0077)—May 24: A celebration of the music and life of Otha Turner, the North Mississippi fife master and rural blues legend, and his daughter Bernice Turner Pratcher, who



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Bull's head and inlaid front panel from a lyre (detail), Ur, Mesopotamia, ca. 2550-2400 B.C.,
The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.

both died earlier this year. A sharecropper's son who spent his days tilling the land, Turner taught himself to play handmade fifes, and his syncopated music formed a vital link between Civil War-era martial songs and modern blues and beyond (he can be heard in the opening scenes of the movie "Gangs of New York"). His daughter Bernice was an accomplished musician in her own right and was also Otha's longtime champion, as manager of the family group, the **Rising Star Fife & Drum Band.** Joining the band to pay tribute are **Elliott Sharp, Ari Up,** and other downtown luminaries. May 27: Born in Wales, raised in Brittany, and currently living in New York City and Dublin, **Katell Keineg** has a beautiful and wild soprano voice with a range as wide as her background.

SOUTHPAW

125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—May 25: The **Essex Green.** The pop sounds of yesterday, available today. Flutes, organs, and tambourines are alive and well in the songs of this Brooklyn-based trio. Their second album, "The Long Goodbye," is less psychedelic than their first. Instead of lolling about in musical meadows, the band has composed more ballads and rollicking soundscapes.

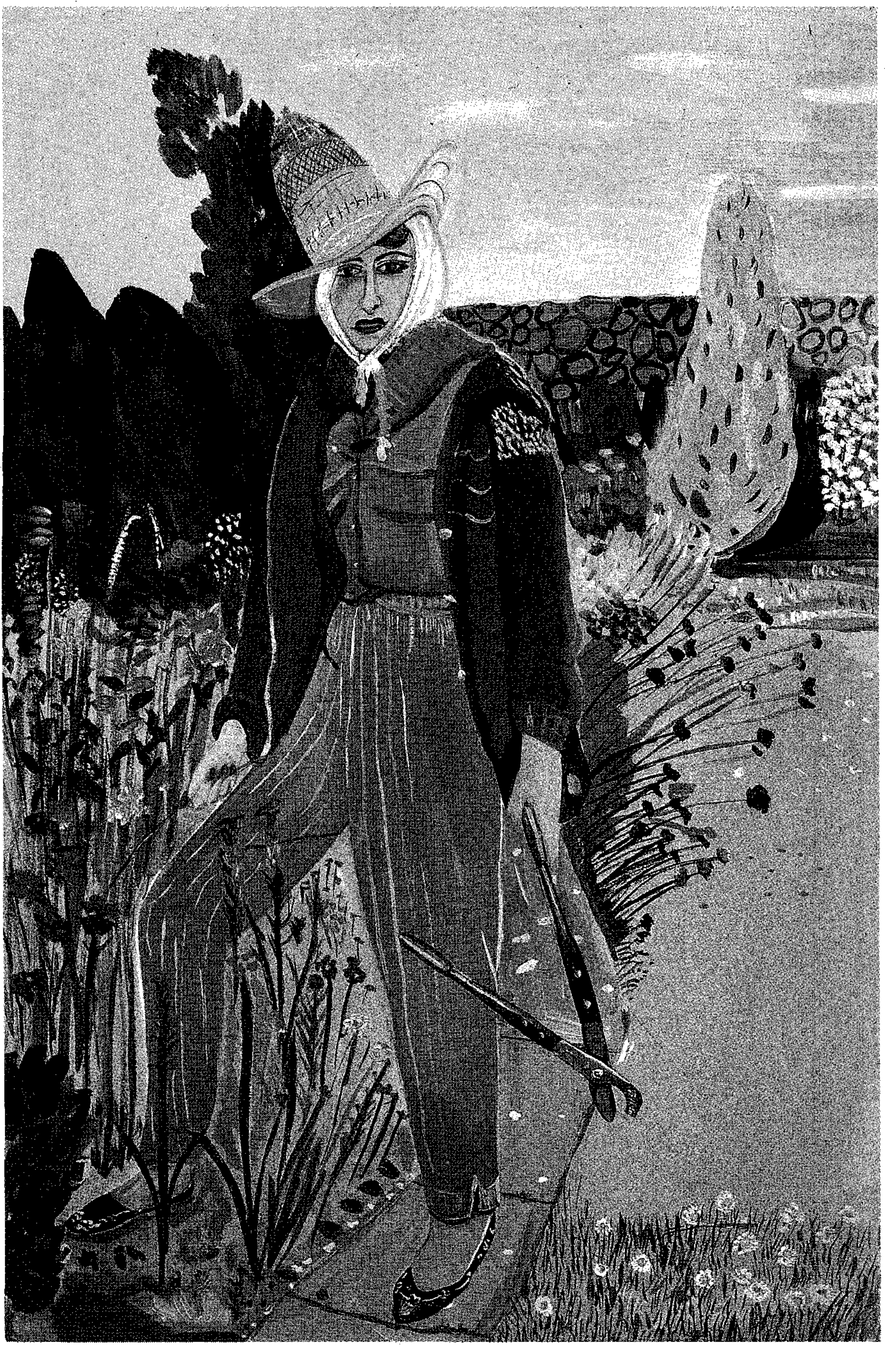
JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 24: The ever-elegant vocalist **Karen Akers** may be doing an evening of theatre songs, but don't expect to hear chestnuts. Her imaginative program touches on rarely heard gems from "Nine," "Applause," and other personal favorites. Dining.

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—As jazz institutions go, the octogenarian **Marian McPartland** (May 22-24) is still pretty frisky. The vigorous elegance of her own work remains, as does the enthusiasm she extends to other musicians from her pulpit on NPR. This grande dame has been a steadying force on the New York scene for six decades; time flies when you're upholding the virtues of mainstream piano. Dining.



"Lady Birley," from Maira Kalman's show of gouaches, at Julie Saul.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through May 25: The blues comes in many forms for the intrepid **Taj Mahal;** his forthcoming release, "Hanapepe Dream," is centered around Hawaiian music.

CARLYLE HOTEL

Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and the irrepressible **Bobby Short,** who is celebrating his thirty-fifth year there. On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen** and the **Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY

540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Starting May 27: **Bucky Pizzarelli,** the dean of mainstream jazz guitar, joins members of his talented clan, including **John,** the noted guitarist and singer, and his daughter-in-law **Jessica Molaskey,** a charming vocalist.

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through May 25: The occasional collaboration of the pianist **McCoy Tyner** and the vibraphonist **Bobby Hutcherson** goes way back to their classic Blue Note recordings of the sixties. Having practically written the modernist book on their respective instruments, these two icons still find plenty of common ground in modal lyricism and full-force improvisation. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—May 22-25: Bassists don't come any more agile than **John Patitucci,** but this always-in-demand player is also a gifted composer and bandleader, as demonstrated on his new album, "Songs, Stories & Spirituals." Dining.

PETE'S CANDY STORE

709 Lorimer St., Brooklyn (718-302-3770)—May 22: The **Howard Fishman** quartet celebrates three years of free Thursday-night shows here. Led by the guitarist and gravelly-voiced singer Fishman, a Connecticut native who spent his musically formative years in New Orleans, this quartet spins out an eclectic mix of small-group swing, early American folk, and even indie rock.

SMOKE

2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—A sturdy, often inspired stylist, the trumpeter **Eddie Henderson** (here with his quartet May 23-24) is deep in a resurgence.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through May 25: There's no small thinking for **Uri Caine,** whose wide-eyed musical endeavors include adapting Bach's "Goldberg Variations" for expanded jazz ensembles. He's here with a trio, so we can concentrate on Caine's splendid abilities as a pianist and improviser. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—The Costume Institute is throwing a glamorous toga party called **"Goddess,"** which will include appearances by Jacqueline Kennedy and Jennifer Lopez (or at least their gowns, by Valentino and Chanel, respectively). In the early nineteenth century, the Greco-Roman look was popular; judging from a group of prints here the effect was more "Middlemarch" than Mount Olympus. The uncorseted body of the twentieth century freed designers to drape and fold, from the pleated silk of Fortuny to the fluid chiffon of Tom Ford for Gucci (the show's sponsor, along with Condé Nast). As for goddesses, the one-shouldered sea-green dress that Mrs. Kennedy wore on a state visit to Cambodia would have looked just fine on Aphrodite as she emerged from the foam. Through Aug. 3. ♦ Museumgoers still searching for the perfect

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U-Turn

"There must be a phrase book they hand out in maternity wards," Delia was saying over coffee. "I mean, why does every parent have some saying that mystifies their children? I'm sure they think they're passing on the secrets of life itself, but what they're doling out are cryptic koans that you spend years trying to decipher."

"It's so true," Maggie reached over to touch her friend's arm. It was both a gesture of empathy and a signal for her friend to take a little rest. Delia tended to filibuster her way through their chats.

"My mom always said, 'If wishes were horses...' That's it! She never finished the sentence. I had no idea what she was talking about for thirty years." Apparently, Maggie's forearm squeeze didn't register; Delia forged on. "The way she said it was so foreboding, like a harbinger of doom. You know? Was I supposed to be afraid of making wishes or horses?" At this point Maggie had left the conversation, staring instead into the florescent-lit dessert case. Why had no one ordered a slice of that towering chocolate fudge cake with the whipped-cream-walnut ziggurat on the top and yet there was only one slice left of the wheat-free carrot "cake" with tofu "frosting"?

Later, when Maggie turned down her street she thought about her dad's famous phrase, "Life is not a one-way street." Nearly every time she approached her house, located on a one-way street, the same memory was triggered. That one day when she came home to report that she had failed her trigonometry final. Growing up, she had been a good student, but she hated math and had chosen to let this one class slip. During the entire semester, her dad had encouraged her to just make a little effort and not "cut off her nose to spite her face" (another of his sayings—one that she understood). She not only ignored him, she defied him. She set out to fail. It was a pointless act of belligerence and even then she knew it.

On the day the semester had ended, the regret set in as she told him her news. But her father's sigh of disappointment only turned that black coal of regret into a brilliant diamond of indignation. She turned from him and loudly went to her room. When he came upstairs to offer solutions through the door—concluding with the old "life is not a one-way street"—Maggie only heard the thud of a gauntlet hitting the ground. What was he talking about? She threw open the door and screamed at him in a way she never had. The words she let loose were a barbed potpourri of petty hurts from the past eighteen years, quotes from the boozy monologues of her favorite movies, and a few things that just sounded mean but had nothing to do with the situation at hand. It was a typical episode in a teenage life and like many typical things its effect was both real and lingering. Her father became more cautious around her, not as quick with his advice. And she became careful with her words, finding a new safety in silence.

"Did I ever tell you about Roger?" Delia began. Maggie warmed her hands on the sides of her mug and shook her head. Once again, the conversation with her best friend was more a solo performance for an audience of one. Maggie didn't mind—much. Delia was entertaining. Her taste for adventure had led to a novel's worth of anecdotes. There was the time she auditioned for an acting job as a pickle in a waistcoat and the agent said she was better suited to play celery. And the date with the Argentine diplomat who refused to speak to her the entire night, then asked her to marry him on the drive home. Or the serial tale of her landlord, a self-proclaimed Reiki master, and the many nights when the ceremonial chanting filling the building kept her awake. Maggie enjoyed these stories, so she sat back and listened.

One night, Maggie was up late working when she stopped to study the image on her laptop's screen. It was a digital photo of her dad at a recent birthday party. It was great image of him. His eyes were, in that Irish way, smiling. One hand held a glass of wine aloft while the other rested over his heart. He looked like he was in mid-toast, probably thanking all his friends for "putting up with him" over the years. He looked happier than she'd ever seen him. Maggie wasn't at the party (trapped in the city under another deadline). Instead she had sent him a huge bouquet of flowers. He had taken up gardening and their phone conversations lately had consisted of him speaking mostly in Latin about his latest botanical obsession. She had also included a note that took days to write. It wasn't long, but it was the first time she had apologized for that day decades ago. She had never put into words her gratitude for his encouragement. She wrote that he was the reason for her all successes. It was just a few words on a page, but for Maggie, it summed up everything she had left unsaid.

He didn't respond to the card. When she called the next day, he went on about the arrangement, naming each genus and species, but not a word about the card. She wasn't surprised, considering his lifelong admonishes against "bleeding hearts" and "navel gazing" (more famous phrases). And she didn't ask about it either.

That one night, however, sitting at her computer, she received all the response she needed. For no reason in particular, she printed out the picture. She held it, studying his ruddy face, his smile, his blue eyes, the intense colors of the flowers on the table behind him. There amid sprays of gladiola and freesia, she spotted the plastic trident where her card should have been. It was empty. She scanned the picture and saw a tiny detail, something she had never noticed on screen: the corner of her card was peeking out from his shirt pocket, just under his hand. Her words had gotten through.

"I have a story for you," Delia said as they sat down together the next day.

"Wait, I have one for you," Maggie interrupted, starting out in a new direction.

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summer house should visit the playful roof-garden sculpture by Roy Lichtenstein, the late Pop artist who gave comic books cachet. The painted aluminum cottage has a red roof, white and yellow walls, and a blue chimney. Curtains resembling the artist's signature brushstrokes frame the windows. From the front, the structure appears nearly flat, like a 2-D illustration on vacation in physical space, and it plays a neat trick in inverted perspective: one corner that seems to advance toward the museum in fact recedes toward the park. The house sits on its own little lawn with a sign warning viewers to keep off the grass. Through Nov. 2. ♦ **"Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting,"** a ravishing and keenly illuminating show, marshalls great paintings to demonstrate a miracle in art history: the rebirth of Spanish Baroque painting in nineteenth-century Paris, brought about by Édouard Manet. At one end of its two-century leap, the show is augmented with works by Zurbarán, Murillo, and other Spaniards, and, at the other, by relevant figures from Delacroix to Sargent. But the summit meeting of Velázquez and Manet dominates. Through June 8. ♦ **"Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus."** Through Aug. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

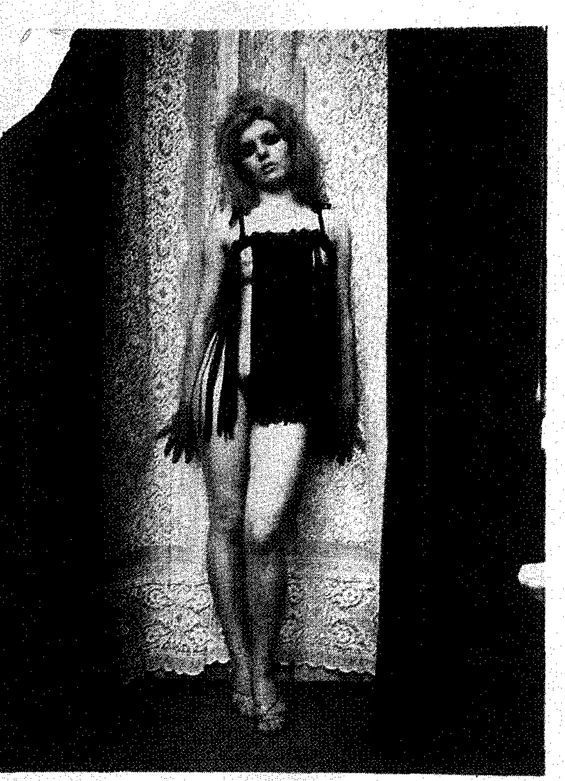
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Selections from the permanent collection are on view. (Open Thursdays, Sundays, and Mondays, 10 to 5, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle."** Through June 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—In this retrospective devoted to the works of Elie Nadelman, more than two hundred sculptures, arranged chronologically, trace the evolution of Nadelman's concerns: from his early busts, which speak to ancient ideals of beauty, to his jazz-era middle works, folksy wooden genre figures of dancers and circus performers with sinuous bodies and gessoed features, to his final postwar efforts, rows of plaster figurines that look like toy-size gods and monsters. Through July 20. ♦ **"Paul Sietsema: Empire"** presents the chef d'œuvre of an experimental filmmaker: a ragged twenty-four-minute silent 16-mm. film that bristles with pans, fades, jump cuts, and so on of static objects in negative black and white or red and white. The main subjects are beautifully made models of an eighteenth-century French rococo interior and of Clement Greenberg's art-filled living room in 1964—shrines of extreme taste, which Sietsema's camera explores like a tongue probing broken teeth. The film's hermetic fervor becomes as disquieting as urgent warnings in a language that you don't quite understand. Sequences of dizzying geometric animation and ominous closeups of a grasshopper vary the spell. Through June 8. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Old-fashioned museological Egyptology meets state-of-the-art, user-friendly installation in **"Egypt Reborn,"** the new long-term setting for the museum's collection. The sunny, spacious galleries present thousands of objects, tracing an evolution from the pre-dynastic period in 3500 B.C. to the period of Roman influence. Wonders include a lavishly painted cartonnage with matching interior coffin lid, a frog-shaped childbirth amulet in brilliant blue faience, and a mummified crocodile from the crocodile cemetery at Kahun. An almost infinite listing of favorites is possible—just don't miss the bird-headed terracotta figure thought to be a fertility goddess, one of the oldest, most renowned, and most beautiful artifacts in the world. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Whistler, Women, and Fashion"** may sound recherché, but the show of that name provides a master key to James McNeill Whistler's often daunting genius. The expatriate dandy had a serious passion for the subtleties of women's wear. He was a lover of women and a hierophant of art for art's sake. In masterpieces like "Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs. Frances Leyland" (1871-74), clothes become masks for the subjects and for himself. The show traces this aspect of his career from the brassy realist work of the eighteen-sixties, in Paris, through the elegantly assimilated influences of Velázquez and Goya to the profound late portraits, made after the social disaster of his famous lawsuit against John Ruskin in 1878. Real period dresses and fashion plates bring viewers ignorant of fin-de-siècle couture up to speed with the semiotics of sleeves and bustles, which, to Whistler, were poetry at once precise and sublime. Through July 13. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, Friday evenings until 9, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)



A Polaroid by Carlo Mollino, at Salon 94 (see Photography).

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

POLLY APFELBAUM
Apfelbaum's floor sculpture, a soothing, simple installation with the happy-go-lucky title "Today I Love Everybody," presents lily-pad-like groups of spangled shapes cut from thin velour. Each of the hundreds of three- or four-inch fabric pieces is dyed with a flower-shaped mark. These ad-hoc carpets clustered near the gallery's columns resemble fallen leaves gathered around tree trunks, or clumped dendrites, or stars. So the installation is a landscape, although the patently fake velvet and crudely drawn blossoms keep the imagination from straying too far into the pastoral. Through May 25. (Triple Candie, 461 W. 126th St. 212-865-0783.)

BERNARD CHAET
The septuagenarian modernist continues to paint Cape Ann shorelines in a jumpy, keyed-up palette. Evidently Chaet gets up early: his Ping-Pong-ball suns often loom just above the horizon, shining across breakers, rocks, and boulder fields of cloud. The beach has always been a congenial spot for painters whose abstract inclinations need a perceptual perch; for Chaet it's also an opportunity to measure himself against the ghosts of Hartley, Dove, Gottlieb, and Guston. Through May 24. (David Findlay, 41 E. 57th St. 212-486-7660.)

JOHN DUBROW
A conservative painter with a ruggedly precise touch and an air of appealing sobriety, Dubrow typically alternates landscape and portraiture. Here he goes off the rails in a big Biblical scene that may be one of the weirdest pictorial responses to September 11th. The bearded figure in the center is Moses, with Aaron and Hur at his sides helping to raise his arms—a magical gesture that, according to Exodus, ensured the Israelites' triumph over the Amelikites. The contemporary implications are far from clear, to say the least. As a painting, it's the only real failure in the show, but it gives you a welcome jolt of nuttiness. Through May 31. (Salander O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 212-879-6606.)

KORI NEWKIRK
But for a fuzzy nude self-portrait—a tall black man standing in an icy forest scene—everything in this show is white: fake snow, neon icicles, a circle of ghostly encaustic shark silhouettes incised into the walls. Loitering in the gallery upstairs, there's a life-sized model of the marine predator, in fibreglass with rhinestone eyes—almost as eerie in the icy surroundings as Damian Hirst's shark. Through June 8. (The Project, 427 W. 126th St. 212-662-8610.)

KURT SCHWITTERS
Schwitters invented the nonsense word "Merz" for all that was cast aside by *Kommerz* (commerce): beer labels, tram tickets, cigarette wrappers, torn ads, newspaper articles, and photographs. The visionary pack rat hoarded these scraps and created jagged, jazzy, exquisitely balanced little compositions that offer glimpses of abstract perfection but never lose touch with their beginnings in the gutter. Reproduction doesn't do Schwitters justice, since texture is as important to him as shape and color. Up close, his kaleidoscopic collages and assemblages still deliver a shock of Dadaist energy. Through May 23. (Ubu, 416 E. 59th St. 212-753-4444.)

Short List

FRANZ KLINE
C&M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020. Through June 7.

GEORGE SEGAL
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400. Through June 14.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

CAROL BOVE
In the best work by this Swiss-born and Berkeley-raised artist, found objects from the late sixties and early seventies—a Pasolini film still, a Sol LeWitt catalogue, a nudist magazine—are arranged on period wood-and-metal shelves and tables, in tableaux that suggest the output of some hippie Haim Steinbach.

The installation also includes spectral watercolor portraits of Twiggy and Mia Farrow, a floor stack made of vintage self-help books, and wall drawings made of string (the Sanskrit title of one translates "Existence, Knowledge, Bliss") that could be mandalas designed by a young Frank Stella. Through June 21. (Team, 527 W. 26th St. 212-279-9219.)

OLAFUR ELIASSON
Viewers expecting the Danish-Icelandic artist to work his magic with steam and mirrors will be sorely disappointed by his latest show, which looks like the aftermath of a high-school shop class taught by a Buckminster Fuller fan. (Eliasson has been working closely with Fuller's friend Einar Thorsteinn.) Interlocking shelving units create a makeshift workroom crammed full of miniature geodesic domes, spiral spheres, and tetragons made of copper, foam core, and, in one case, neon, which look like furnishings for an eco-conscious doll house. A bad case of more is less. Through June 14. (Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 212-414-4144.)

LOUISE FISHMAN
Fishman's earnest, swashbuckling, and cerebral paintings cycle through the roster of Ab Ex and minimalist attitudes, arriving at a hybrid that is neither post- nor neo-. She quotes from both movements, but unironically, attesting to a persistent though mournful belief in painting as pure form. Not that pure means unmuddied, since her palette tends toward the dour—scumbly blues and pond-water greens, with the occasional splash of toxic-looking orange. Titles like "Then," "The Way Back," and "My City" hint at some disaffection in the aftermath of September 11th, but the thematic gesture seems merely polite. In these paintings, only the colors burn. Through May 24. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

LIZ LARNER
As an artist and teacher in Los Angeles, Larner has helped to establish that city's present reputation for innovative, smart, and beautiful new sculpture. Here she shows nine roughly basketball-size jumbles of four or five open cubes apiece, all made of paper-wrapped metal rods that are painted in intricate alterations of soft colors. The works are sprightly perceptual machines. As you move around their triangular pedestals, geometric and colored forms take shape momentarily, then disintegrate. Looking at them takes practice. Try keeping one eye closed until you get the knack. Through June 14. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

JULIAN LAVERDIERE
Laverdiere, whose "Towers of Light" memorialized what he called the city's phantom limbs, here animates another ghostly landmark. "Lost Cornerstone" emits a low, perpetual rumble and an occasional breeze as a five-foot-square model of an eagle cornice from Penn Station rotates on a steel cord, falling through the room within inches of the walls. In case anyone misses the implications of the fallen eagle, the "Imperial Dragsters," miniature models of Napoleon's tomb, set on the high-wheeled, tank-like platform of a miniaturized Lamborghini LM002, offer an iconic image of an empire on the move. Through May 24. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

TONY OURSLER
Oursler, who made his name projecting video faces onto the heads of mannequins, then moved on to puppets and eggs on sticks, here plays up the toylike quality of his work with Disneyesque fibreglass heads, on which he reduces faces to a feature or two. One round blob is the screen for a talkative, lipstick-smeared mouth, the two bobble ears above it for buggy, asynchronously blinking eyes. Oursler stars as an unhappy-in-love cyclops in purple eyeshadow and the too-knowledgeable "Perp," who advises parents to "follow their instincts" on "common sense safety" for kids. Children seem to love the work. Through June 21. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

PHILIPPE PARRENO
A minute's worth of footage of the Arctic Circle is projected, after a pause of four minutes and thirty-three seconds (the length of John Cage's famously silent composition), onto seven white panels (the 1951 Rauschenberg painting that inspired Cage). Across the room, film of a giant cuttlefish flickers on and off while, behind a white curtain, posters—of a snowman, a cartoon advertisement, a truck—glow in the dark, fading to black when the lights come on. The tug between perception and memory is compelling, but the installation is stilted. Parreno may invoke Cage, but his project is as far from chance operation as that mollusk is from the North Pole. Through May 31. (Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467.)

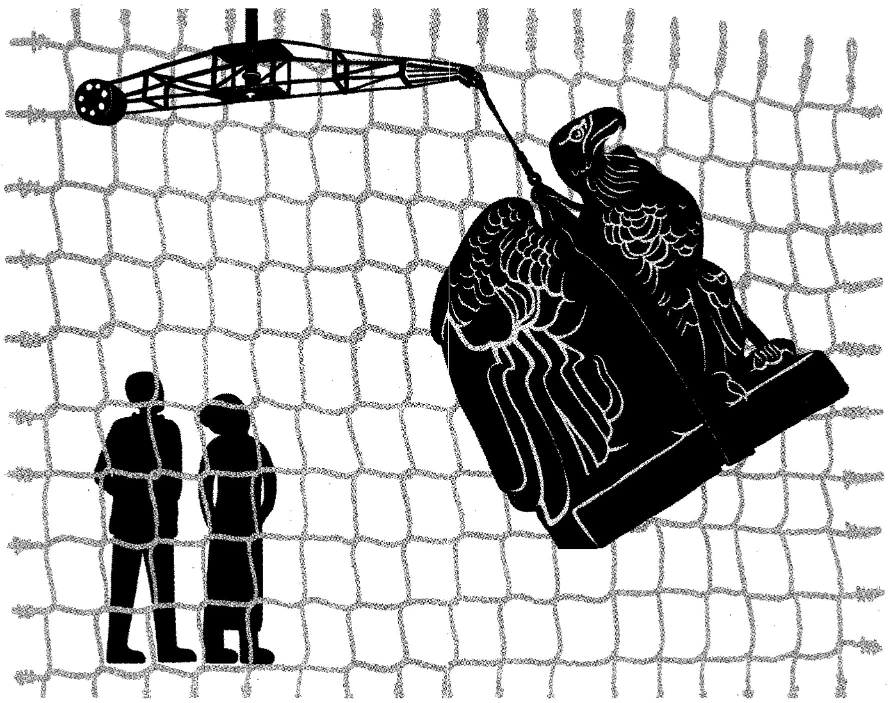
JOEL SHAPIRO
Shapiro has gone colossal with two pieces, one of them twenty feet high, whose abstract animation and brawny materiality suggest a collaboration between Alexander Calder and Richard Serra. Less obviously figurative than other recent stuff by the artist, the configurations of bronze beams still contain surprises of lurching gestures and giddy balances. In some svelte wooden pieces, Shapiro introduces a propping element here and there to keep things upright—the effect is not structural but comic, evoking the designated driver at a wild party. Through July 31. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

Short List

MAIRA KALMAN
Julie Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-637-2410.
Through June 14.

AMY SILLMAN
Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.
Through May 23.

RICHARD TUTTLE
Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St.
212-999-7337. Through May 31.



"Lost Cornerstone," an installation by Julian Laverdiere, at Lehmann Maupin.

PETER HAMLIN

GALLERIES-SOHO

AIDAS BAREIKIS
The Lithuanian-born sculptor's third show is a sort of goth parade float, composed of shredded Halloween accessories and dime-store kitsch. Manned by leering marionettes whose bodies spurt foam insulation at every seam or orifice, the assemblage has a kind of glittering exuberance. The only wrong note is the Watteau-inspired title, "Le Charme de la Vie," which gives the piece a highbrow pedigree and a sarcastic tenor that don't suit its campy cheer. Through June 5. (Koenig, 249 Centre St. 212-334-9255.)

"MY MOTHER'S AN ARTIST"
This sweetheart of a show, which offers thirty cross-generational pairings (works by an artist displayed beside samples from his or her mom), highlights a familiar phenomenon: most of the pictures by Mom have a folksy or Sunday painter-ish look. There are a few cases—Tom Burkhardt and his mother, Yvonne Jacquette; Betye Saar and her daughters, Alison and Lezley; Jane Fine and her mother, Cecile—where both generations belong in the big leagues. When it comes to the Glantzman family, however, the scales tip the other way: judging from the works here, Muriel's daughters, Sara and Judy, should have paid more attention to their mother. Through May 29. (Alliance Art Gallery, 197 East Broadway. 212-780-2300, ext. 378.)

"THE STAGE OF DRAWING: GESTURE AND ACT"
The title sounds inauspiciously leaden, and, sure enough, this ambitious show performs a kind of reverse alchemy, turning gold—in the form of three centuries' worth of works on paper from the Tate collection—into dullness. Individual drawings shine through: there are terrific pieces by William Blake, Lucio Fontana, Max Beckmann, Eva Hesse, Henry Fuseli, and others. But the curators, Avis Newman and Catherine de Zegher, have arranged their disparate picks in a staticky, fits-and-starts sequence. Eclecticism triumphs, and most of the art works, shorn of context or affinity, seem diminished and adrift. Through May 31. (Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 212-219-2166.)

Short List

HELMUT FEDERLE
Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.
Through July 12.

PHOTOGRAPHY

ROBERT ADAMS
"The New West," Adams's 1974 book about the battle between nature and sprawl in Colorado, let the world know that the photographer found the grandiose landscapes of Carleton Watkins, Edward Weston, and Ansel Adams (no relation) anachronistic. The photographs on view—images of cracked parking lots, half-built housing developments, yards juxtaposing wagon wheels with muscle cars, and electrical wires strung against mountain backdrops—were not included in that seminal work. Through June 14. (Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067.)

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE HISTORY CHANNEL

Winston Churchill famously described Russia as "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." Once an elusive adversary, Russia has confounded both her enemies and allies for centuries, and she continues to entrance historians around the world. In the tumult following the collapse of the Soviet Union, efforts have been made to revive the grandeur of the country's regal roots. Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra and their children were canonized three years ago by the Russian Orthodox Church, and the dramatic reconstruction of Moscow's colossal Church of Christ the Saviour, demolished by Stalin in 1931, was completed in 2000.

Along with the reconstruction of Russian history comes a desire to rediscover the compelling story of the tsars and tsarinas. The trajectory from bucolic Muscovite chieftains to the majesty of the Winter Palace is the tale recounted in "Russia: Land of the Tsars," airing on The History Channel on May 26th and 27th.

RUSSIA: LAND OF THE TSARS

ON THE HISTORY CHANNEL

IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROMANOVS

While the mighty sprawl of the Russian Empire has dwindled after the thaw of the Cold War, the remaining states of the Russian Federation still comprise the world's largest nation. At one time, the empire extended to a sixth of the globe. Spanning twelve time zones and two continents, its distance from end to end was then equal to the distance separating Moscow from Chicago. Even now, across the nation's broad expanse, the history of the tsars looms large.

"Everywhere we went in Russia, we found people delighted that an American TV network was devoting so much time and resources to Russian history before Communism," notes Don Campbell, a producer and writer for "Russia: Land of the Tsars." Given the tight reins the Communist Party held on information about life before the revolution, the privilege of celebrating their own history has been a source of pleasure for twenty-first century Russians. Indeed, its august history has become a tool used by the nation to restore its footing on the world stage. In the vacuum left by Communism's collapse, interest in the tsars and in Russian history has helped to restore a sense of normalcy. "For the Russian people, there is a real yearning for stability—for models to hold on to," observes Campbell.

BLACK AND WHITE IN COLOR

A painter's palette has usually displayed a spectrum of color, but the pioneers of photography were limited to black and white. Among the production highlights of "Russia: Land of the Tsars" is the inclusion of remarkable color prints made during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II

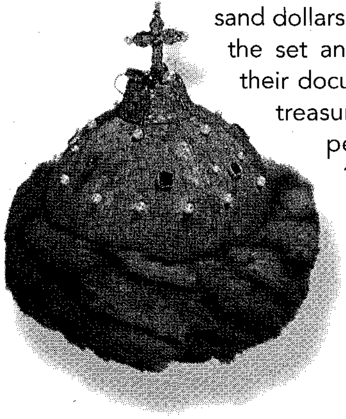
(1894–1917) by Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii, official chemist and photographer. Charged with the task of documenting the empire, Prokudin-Gorskii developed a revolutionary method of creating color prints that resulted in more than two thousand negatives of Russian life. His secret was to use a camera of his own design that exposed a narrow glass photographic plate three times in quick succession using red, green, and blue filters. When all three exposures were combined and projected by a so-called "magic lantern," the resultant image was in color. The Library of Congress purchased the plates from his heirs, and, via a color-rendering process called digichromatography, can now reproduce photographs. The resulting images, which appear throughout "Russia: Land of the Tsars," offer almost surreal glimpses of an era that normally would only have been preserved in black and white photography.

LOCAL COLOR

Shooting on location in Russia came with an assortment of wrinkles indicative of the surging new Russian capitalism. The production was plagued by everything from whimsical (if entrepreneurial) fee setting to a brush with the Russian Mafia.

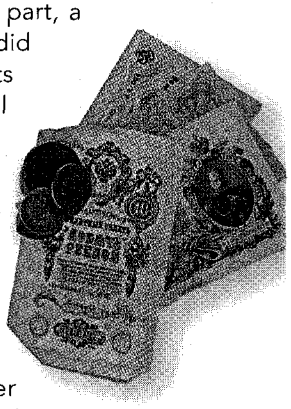
The ambitious script and shooting schedule for "Russia: Land of the Tsars" called for dramatic recreations of key moments in Russian history, from the coronations of the tsars to the legendary demise of Rasputin. Whereas prearranged permits had been secured for all sites, crews often faced ad hoc surprises. At one site inside the Kremlin cathedral (the opulent venue for Tsar Nicholas II's coronation), the location fee jumped suddenly by a magnitude of ten—rocketing from one thousand to ten thousand dollars. The dismayed producers struck the set and opted instead to to buttress their documentary with another historical treasure. They used grainy yet compelling period footage of the 1896 coronation procession shot by Camille Cerf, a cameraman for the pioneering French film company, the Lumière Brothers.

In the tumult following the collapse of the Soviet Union, efforts have been made to revive the grandeur of the country's regal roots.



While the belabored murder of the Siberian mystic, Rasputin, at the Tsar's Royal Stable was being recreated, the associate producer in Russia, Alexander Predovsky, noticed some sinister characters skulking about on the periphery of the site. Given that the set was strewn with expensive film equipment, Predovsky alerted the authorities. They quickly apprehended the suspicious onlookers, who turned out to be notorious Russian gangsters, fully armed.

THE FAIR GENDER



Tsarist Russia was, for the most part, a thoroughly masculine monarchy. It did not even have a formal court, with its attendant charms and civilities, until rather late in the epoch. Yet throughout its history, a number of powerful women had a hand in shaping the Russian Empire.

Sophia, the half-sister of Peter the Great, was one such woman. After Tsar Alexis died in 1676, his daughter Sophia ruled as regent with first her half-brother Fyodor III for the next six years and then Ivan V (through 1689) acting as co-tsars with the young Peter. Sophia did not trust Peter and later had him exiled from Moscow. Her bold assertion of power was met in kind when in 1689, Peter, then seventeen, gained complete control of the Russian government in a plot engineered by his mother, Natalya Naryskina, and Sophia was banished to the Novodevichy convent in Moscow. Another notable woman was Peter the Great's daughter, Elizabeth I, who gained the throne in a bloodless coup and reigned from 1741 to 1762.

Years later, Sophia Perovskaya helped light the fuse that would eventually destroy the empire. As one of the masterminds behind the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, Perovskaya and her anarchist group Narodnaya Volya (The People's Will), set in motion a series of events that would gradually overthrow six centuries of Romanov rule.

The sphere of royalty often revolves around elements of intrigue, deception, and ambition. A journey through "Russia: Land of the Tsars" reveals that the ancient rulers of this epic nation produced legends of equally grand proportions.

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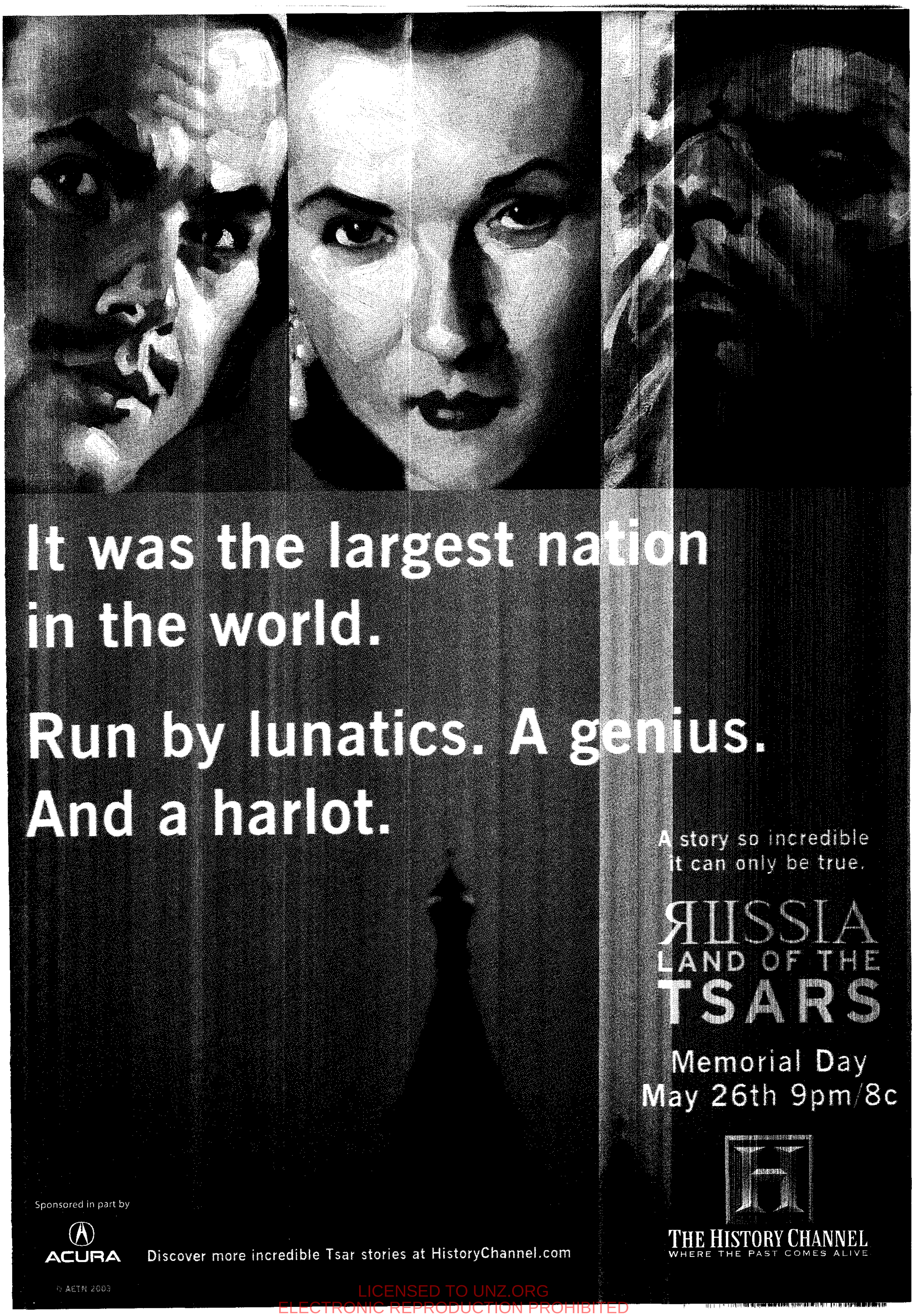

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about May 30, 2003, Promotion Mechanics will conduct a random drawing from among all eligible Tsar Search Matching Game entries received to award (1) Grand Prize: Approximately 500,000
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RUDY BURCKHARDT
These immensely likable black-and-white photos of New Yorkers going through the paces of their day may have been taken sixty years ago, but they are so recognizable and true they could have been taken last week. The most lighthearted pictures are sidewalk shots in which female pedestrians' curvy calves and fluttering skirts are visible as they stroll down gum-speckled cement. The subway shots, compared to the street scenes' bright clarity, have a furry, grainy quality. The bustle of the city above makes the subway seem like a respite. In one underground picture, two young working women sit in conversation near a gleaming white pole; only their white gloves seem brighter. Burckhardt's photos trill with the jazzy swing we expect from summer in New York. Through June 6. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050.)

ARNOLD ODERMATT
Part of the playfulness of Odermatt's photos of car crashes is attributable to the cars themselves, blocky, snub-nosed Volkswagens from the late nineteen-fifties; crumpled fenders and smashed tail-lights aside, they appear more like shiny, slow-moving beetles than like mauled lumps of machinery. Odermatt, a Swiss police photographer, first took official accident-scene pictures and later struck out on his own. Without the contextualizing visuals of a crash—blood, fatalities, collateral damage—the cars assume an inert coolness. Also on view are Odermatt's sly staged images of the police force. In his carefully composed tableaux (taken between 1963 and 1981), the officers direct traffic, frisk a suspect in the woods, and tear about on motorcycles, grinning heartily all the while. Through June 7. (Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 212-727-2752.)

"OUR TRUE INTENT IS ALL FOR YOUR DELIGHT"
Stunningly up-to-the-minute large-format photographs filled with fond ironies—except that all the images originated in the sixties and early seventies as straightforward promotional materials for Butlin Holiday Camps, which were scattered across England. The highly choreographed scenes of high-capacity resort locales—pools, dance floors, posh lounge areas, outdoor roller rinks, beachcomber bars, reception halls—are stocked with real people posing in their own clothes; the postcard photographers capture the sort of bright, color-saturated period detail you might expect from a Baz Luhrmann production. That it's all authentic turns them into time-capsule-style documents, by turns achingly sincere and unwittingly goofy. Opens May 15. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 212-431-0166.)

Short List

CARLO MOLLINO
Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212.
Through June 25.

ROBERT POLIDORI
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.
Through June 14.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
May 21 at 10:15 A.M.: Paintings, drawings, and sculptures from the collection of Meyer and Vivian Potamkin begin a day of American art; works by Lachaise, Hartley, Hopper, La Farge, and Prendergast ("Handkerchief Point," estimated to sell for more than a million dollars) are highlights of the sale. ♦ May 21 at 2: "Easter Eve," a glimmering flower-shop scene by John Sloan (expected to bring up to three million dollars), is the highlight of an auction of American paintings, drawings, and sculpture, which also features works by Homer, O'Keeffe, Bierstadt, and others. ♦ May 22 at 10:15 A.M.: Americana, including silver, Staffordshire pottery, furniture, scrimshaw, and folk art (such as "The Fishing Lady," an extremely rare example of the pastoral scenes that young Boston women of the eighteenth century embroidered onto canvas). ♦ May 22 at 2: Furniture, decorative objects, and fine-art works from the Potamkin collection. ♦ May 23 at 10:15 A.M.: French and Continental furniture and decorations, along with a selection of European art works, ceramics, tapestries, and carpets. ♦ May 27 at 7: The evening session of a two-part sale of Latin-American paintings and sculptures by such artists as Bravo, Matta, Tamayo, Rivera, and Botero ("Culebra," a surprisingly scarifying bronze of a hissing snake), along with a selection of landscapes. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

TABLES FOR TWO

THE CARRIAGE HOUSE
136 W. 18th St. (212-647-8889)—Adam Newton's new Chelsea restaurant, in a landmarked carriage house that once belonged to Elisha Brooks, of Brooks Brothers, manages to be at once glitzy and low-key, inviting and exclusive. As an example of what that means in practice, a casual young couple with two kids threw a party there for thirty of their friends before the place had been open a month: Uma Thurman and Ethan Hawke.

Newton and his designer, Ilan Waisbrod, seem to have blended the white-shoe pedigree with Palm Springs cool. And Newton's Chilean-born chef, Germán Cáceres, knows how to preserve the silhouettes of the svelte and muscular patrons. He worked as a personal chef for Wesley Snipes and Denise Rich and has a sure instinct for male and female diet imperatives, which he indulges Valparaísan style: brawny fare for men, bird bites for women.

On the Rich side, there is a delectable coarse-cut salmon tartare and a *merluza* (Pacific hake) ceviche, flecked with sweet potato, corn, cilantro, and jalapeños. On the Snipes side, there's Chilean sea bass on coconut-milk-sopped basmati rice, studded with bananas—Wesley's favorite, Cáceres nervously confided. The thick pork chop is pan-fried so tenderly that it tastes braised, and it comes with macaroni and cheese mined with flavor bursts of mangoes, apricots, and prunes.

Some of the guests never make it past the sleek bar table, shaped like a surfboard, that hangs from the ceiling on guy wires. Since their taste for being seen is at least as strong as their desire to be fed, they dive into the teeter-totter bar menu, offsetting a tomato-and-Idiazábal-cheese tart with frisky "shrimp shooters" that come with a shot of gazpacho. Both go down well with the house Cosmo, made from *cachaça* and blood-orange purée, or the house Martini, made with Ciroc, the latest French vodka, which, judging from the ad campaign ("Your good taste shows through the glass"), is just right for this crowd. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner; weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $15-$23.)

—*Liesl Schillinger*

CHRISTIE'S
May 21 at 10 A.M. and 2: European furniture, art works, ceramics, and carpets, in a sale that opens with property from the estate of Mollie Wilmot. Among the various-owner lots is a pair of Russian ormolu-mounted mahogany commodes (ca. 1795-1800) supplied to the Pavlovsk Palace. ♦ May 22 at 10 A.M.: American paintings, drawings, and sculptures, featuring works by such artists as Inness, Homer, Eakins ("Cowboys in the Badlands," a painting from 1888, expected to bring up to seven million dollars), and Wyeth. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

ANTIQUORUM
May 21 at 2: A sale of watches. (Grand Havana Room, 666 Fifth Ave. 212-750-1103.)

DOYLE
May 21 at noon: European and American art from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN
May 22 at 10:30 A.M.: Art books and other illustrated books; J. M. Barrie's "Peter Pan Portfolio," featuring twelve large tipped-in color plates by Arthur Rackham (one of three hundred American-edition copies), is a highlight of the sale. ♦ May 22 at 2:30: Literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including a selection of Ian Fleming first editions. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

AMATO OPERA: "ANDREA CHÉNIER"
The Lower East Side's feisty chamber-opera group, in its last production of the season, squeezes Giordano's verismo spectacle of the French Revolution into its pint-size theatre. Anthony Amato directs and conducts. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. May 23-24 at 7:30. Through June 15.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Robert Spano, the intrepid maestro of both the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (and the most talked-about of young American conductors), is at once an insider and a maverick; he programs as much new music as he can get away with, and his interpretations have a nervous edge and a steely sense of line that mark him as a rebel. His début program with the Philharmonic plays to his strengths: cool-tempered Scandinavian scores by Sibelius ("The Oceanides") and Saariaho (the New York première of "Château de l'Âme," with the stratospheric Canadian soprano Valdine Anderson making her Philharmonic début) and Rachmaninoff's doomy "Symphonic Dances." The women of the New York Choral Artists assist. (May 22 at 7:30 and May 23-24 at 8.) ♦ Lorin Maazel returns to conduct the orchestra's twelfth annual free Memorial Day concert at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, an all-Tchaikovsky program featuring the Fifth Symphony and the Violin Concerto (with the young violinist Yura Lee, in yet another début). (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. May 26 at 8. No tickets required.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE
Berlioz, if nothing else, loved to think big, and his Requiem was no exception: it was written to be performed in a grand cathedral, with hundreds of singers and players distributed around the space. Robert Bass's storied ensemble joins with the Riverside Choral Society and the Orchestra of St. Luke's to offer a performance that will take full advantage of Carnegie Hall's resonant auditorium, placing the requisite four brass bands in the tiers and the tenor soloist, Vinson Cole, in the upper balcony. (Carnegie Hall. 917-322-2140. May 21 at 8.)

NEW YORK SCANDIA SYMPHONY
Dorrit Matson's string ensemble, as its name implies, specializes in presenting new Scandinavian music in its concerts, mixed in with more standard fare. In its latest concert at Trinity Church, Matson conducts the American premières of works by Poul Schierbeck and Jan Maegaard ("Triptykon for Violin and String Orchestra," with Mayaki Fukuhara), along with music by Roman and Sibelius (the doughty little "Andante Festivo"). (Broadway at Wall St. May 22 at 1. No tickets required.)

EOS ORCHESTRA: "MASS EN MASSE"
The neutral ground of the Ethical Culture Society's Concert Hall is the setting for the conductor Jonathan Sheffer's latest provocation, a program that presents three radically different visions of what the

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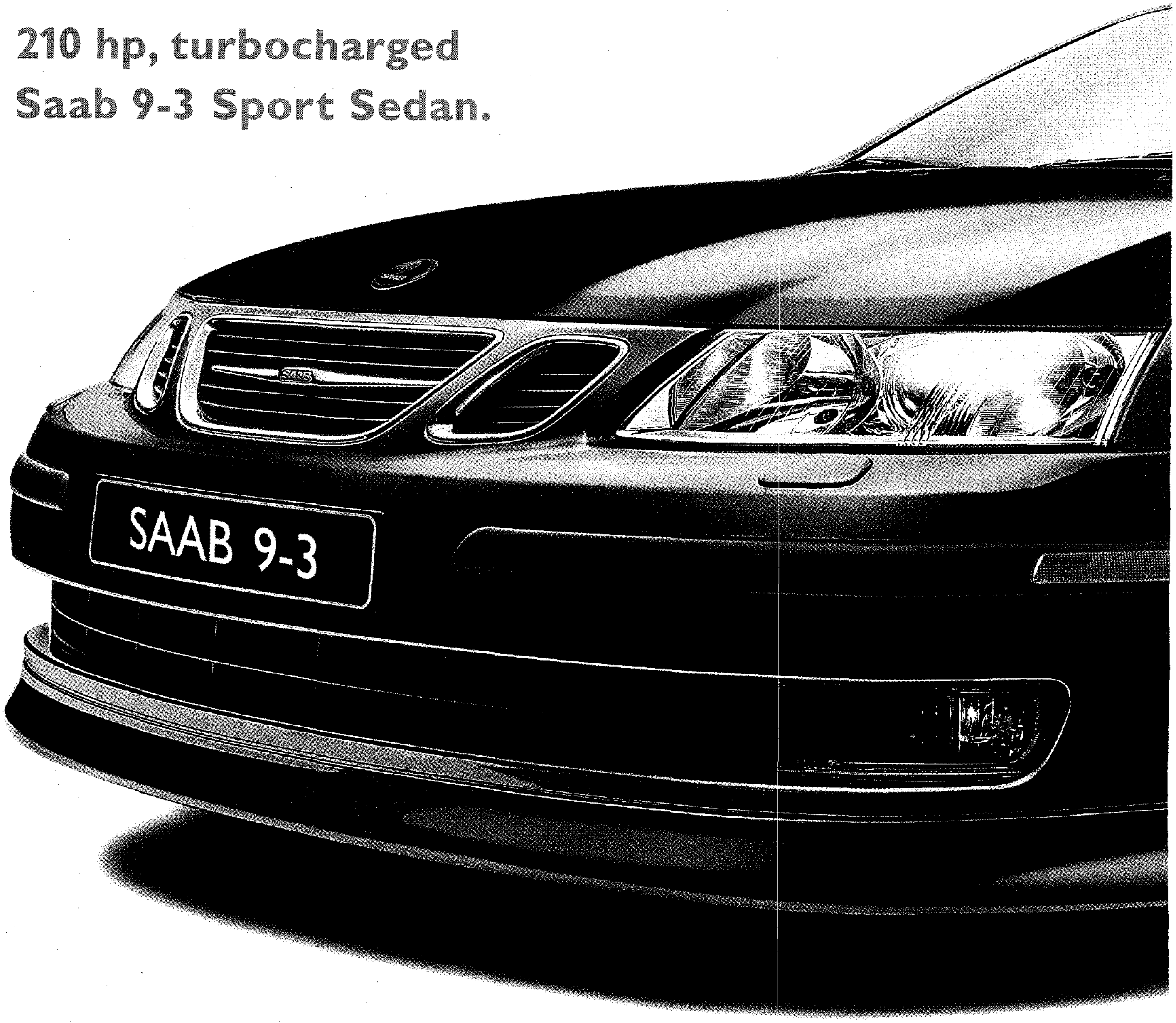

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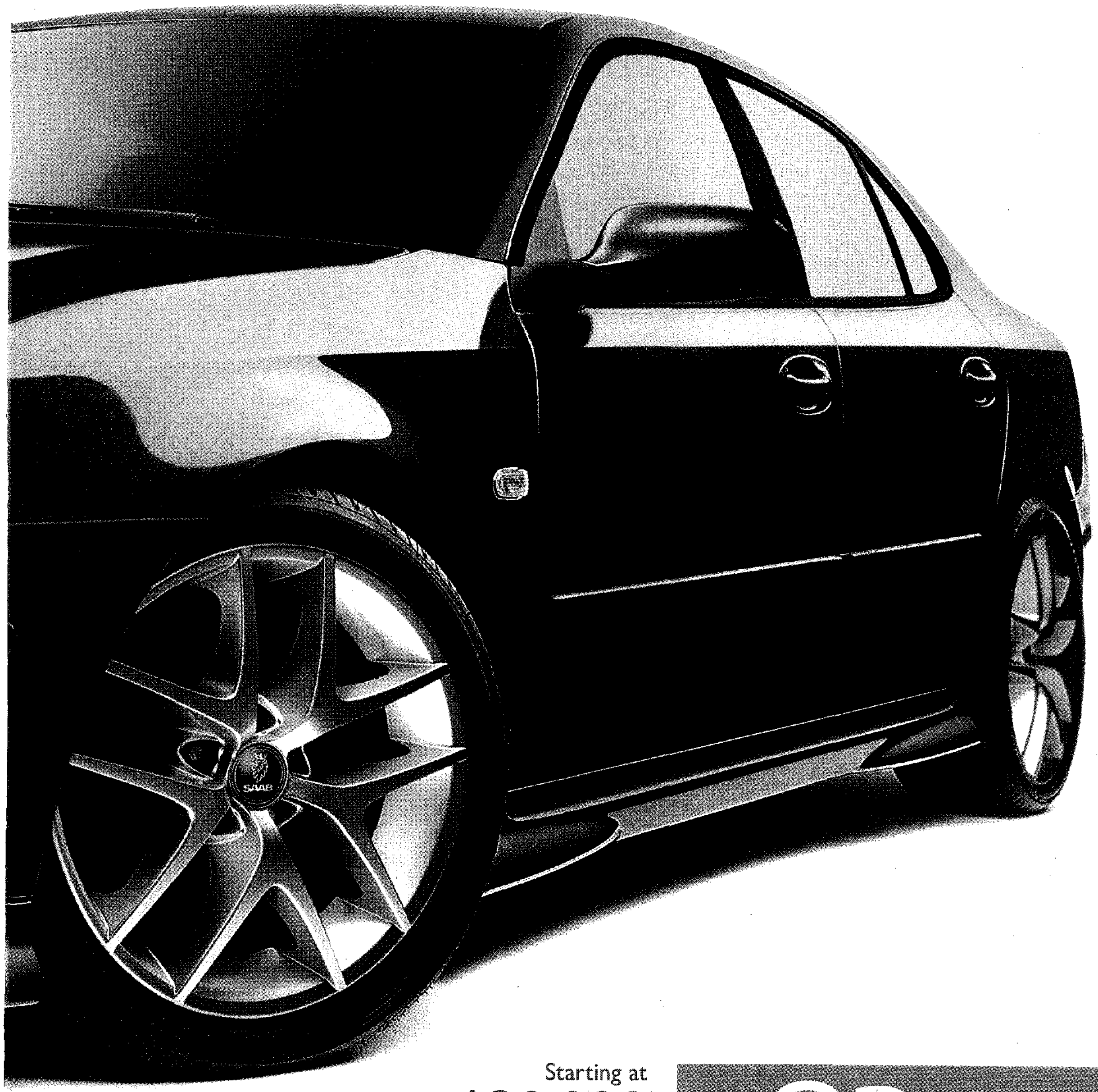

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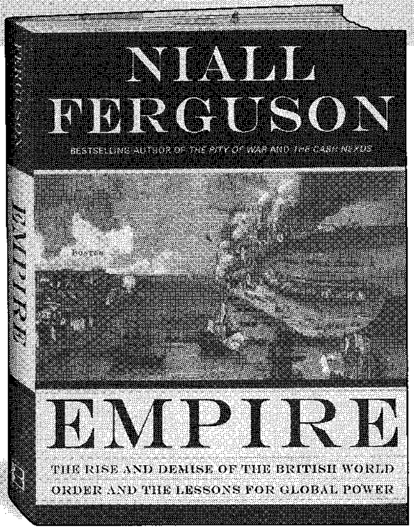
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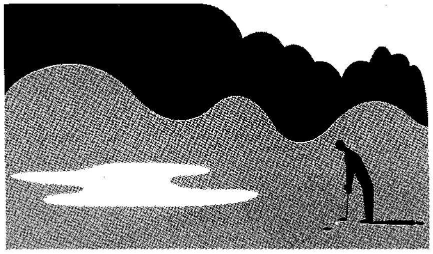
BOOK CURRENTS

To a Tee

"Just remember the three ups," a seasoned caddy tells the sportswriter Rick Reilly, before Reilly makes his caddying début at the Masters. "Show up, keep up, and shut up." In **WHO'S YOUR CADDY?** (Doubleday), he carries the bag for the likes of David Duval and Casey Martin and listens in on the conversations taking place on those hushed sunlit greens. Reilly quickly becomes attuned to the demands of pros, who can be "just slightly more finicky than the Sultan of Brunei." Still, as he learns how to avoid rattling the clubs or knocking over Jack Nicklaus's bag, he gets plenty of experience approaching not only the greens but the golfers, both the famous and the famously avid. Reilly chats with Donald Trump about building seven-million-dollar waterfalls and asks Deepak Chopra, "Is cheating in golf wrong?"



RICHARD McGUIRE

Don Van Natta, Jr., takes up that same question in a round with Bill Clinton, in **FIRST OFF THE TEE** (PublicAffairs), a look at America's various golf-playing Presidents. Theodore Roosevelt steered politicians away from the sport's apparent élitism, warning, "Golf is fatal." Likewise, John F. Kennedy, probably the best of the Presidential duffers, didn't want voters to know he was any good; unlike his predecessor, the golfophilic Dwight D. Eisenhower, Kennedy vigorously avoided being photographed on the links.

Today, golf has shed some of that high-class sheen; Alan Shipnuck's **BUD, SWEAT & TEES** (Simon & Schuster) chronicles run-ins with strippers and gamblers as it follows the ascent of 2002 P.G.A. Championship winner Rich Beem on the pro tour. Beem's philosophy is similarly rebellious: "Pedal to the metal, fire at every flag. It's go low or go home."

—*Lauren Porcaro*

Latin Mass can be. Mozart's Mass in C Major, K. 317 ("Coronation"), written in an age of belief, brings symphonic intensity and operatic elegance to a Classical form; Stravinsky's sleek but deeply felt setting (from 1948) merges the ancient traditions of Western European counterpoint with the iconic monumentality of the Eastern Orthodox rite. The wild card is "Night Mass," a commission from the superb Sebastian Currier (Eos's new composer-in-residence), a twenty-first-century essay on wonder and doubt that replaces the Credo with a new text, "Incertum" ("Uncertainty"), by Thomas Bolt. Arianna Zukerman, Beth Clayton, Wesley Rogers, and Kevin Burdette are the vocal soloists, with the assistance of Dennis Keene's Voices of Ascension choir. (2 W. 64th St. 212-691-6415. May 22 at 8.)

GOLDMAN MEMORIAL BAND
The city's finest concert band presents a trio of free Memorial Day-weekend events, each a program of marches and light classics. For more information, call 212-924-5171. (Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. May 24 at 2. ♦ Washington Square Park, W. 4th St. at MacDougal St. May 25 at 2. ♦ Green-Wood Cemetery, Fifth Ave. at 25th St., Brooklyn. May 26 at 2:30.)

BRONX ARTS ENSEMBLE ORCHESTRA
Performing a tent concert of patriotic and popular music by Porter, Rodgers, Sousa, Bernstein, and other national treasures. (Van Cortlandt Park, Broadway at 246th St. For more information, call 718-601-7399. May 25 at 2.)

RECITALS

LOUIS LORTIE: "THE NIGHT"
This superb Canadian pianist, long renowned in Europe, recently dazzled a Carnegie Hall audience when, filling in for an indisposed Maurizio Pollini, he gave a masterly performance of all the Chopin études—while wearing a brace on his fractured right knee. His new, nocturnal-themed concert includes virtuoso works by Schumann, Liszt, Carter ("Night Fantasies"), and Ravel ("Gaspard de la Nuit"). (Caspary Hall, Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave., at 66th St. 212-327-8437. May 21 at 8.)

SYLVAN WINDS
Special guests (including the flutist and conductor Ransom Wilson) join the wind group for their end-of-season blowout, an evening of works for expanded wind ensembles by Beethoven, Mozart, and Strauss (the Suite in B-Flat Major, Op. 4), along with a piece by Elliott Carter (his early Wind Quintet). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-222-3569. May 21 at 8.)

TAKA KIGAWA
Kigawa, a member of the Greenwich House Music School's piano faculty, is a young artist of stature: he's won acclaim for such feats as performing Boulez's unbelievably difficult Third Sonata from memory (and very well, too). His latest program is also daunting, not only in its technical demands but in its expressive variety: music by Birtwistle, Ligeti (his first book of Études, already part of the repertory), and Boulez (the more supple and tractable "Sur Incises," in its 2001 revision). (Renee Weiler Concert Hall, 46 Barrow St. May 21 at 8. Tickets, available with a donation, are at the door.)

MUSIC BY THEA MUSGRAVE
A seventy-fifth-birthday tribute to the Scottish-American composer, a major pioneer for women in the field; her music combines a pronounced lyrical gift with an Ivesian experimental streak, and it's best heard live. A distinguished lineup of artists (including Richard Rodney Bennett, Carol Wincenc, and Randall Scarlata) perform a selection of her works, including an excerpt from a new opera. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 21 at 8.)

ARTEK: SONGS OF SCHUBERT AND WEBER
The tenor Philip Anderson sings lieder by Schubert (including an excerpt from "Die Schöne Müllerin") and Weber with some unexpected accompaniment: a guitar (a copy of a period instrument), played by Dennis Cinelli. The fortepianist Gwendolyn Toth joins in for music by Haydn and Mozart. (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. May 22 at 1:15. No tickets required.)

AN EVENING OF MOZART
A pickup ensemble, mostly from the ranks of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, offers the Quintet for Viola and Strings in G Minor and the Clarinet Quintet. (Bruno Walter Auditorium, Lincoln Center, 111 Amsterdam Ave. May 22 at 6. No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC
May 22-23 at 7:30: "Big Bash" concerts—occasional outings into chamber-orchestra territory—have been a recent and welcome innovation at the barge; the latest of them features the pianist Steven Beck, who will play Mozart's Piano Concerto in F Major, K. 413, with an ensemble of sixteen strings (including the violinist Colin Jacobsen, the violist Melissa Reardon, and the cellist Clancy Newman) that will have the stage to itself for music by Biber and Stravinsky (the Concerto in D). ♦ May 24 at 7:30 and May 25 at 4: Beck returns to play a program of Mozart sonatas with the violinist Mark Peskanov. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"INTERPRETATIONS" SERIES:
THOMAS BUCKNER
Buckner, the downtown scene's baritone of choice, heads to Merkin Concert Hall to offer song settings in the experimentalist tradition, including works by Mel Graves ("Blanco," a setting of Octavio Paz), Leroy Jenkins, and William Allaudin Mathieu, assisted by the percussionist George Marsh and the pianist Joseph Kubera. (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 22 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
CRYSTAL ANNIVERSARY CONCERT
The pianists Michael Barrett and Steven Blier (the group's artistic directors) celebrate fifteen years of music with such favorite singers as Amy Burton, Rinat Shaham, Peter Kazaras, and the vocal-piano duo of Bolcom and Morris, in a typically combustible high-low mix of art songs, cabaret songs, and show tunes, by such masters as Weill, Poulenc, Gershwin, Schoeck, Bernstein, Jacques Brel, and Charles Trenet. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. May 22 at 8.)

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET SEMINAR
The Juilliard picks up where its mighty peer, the Emerson, left off at Carnegie Hall last week, coaching its own platoon of fine young quartets (including the Chiara, the Fry Street, and the Vega) for two culminating public concerts in which each group will play a full-length repertory work. (Paul Hall, Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center Plaza. May 23 at 4 and 8. No tickets required.)

ENGINE 27: "CHIRIBIQUETTE"
A performance piece by Ricardo Arias, in which a combo of live musicians (manipulating homemade instruments, electronics, and laptop computers) perform with, or against, a background ambience distilled from the noises of the Amazon rain forest. (Engine 27, 173 Franklin St., between Hudson and Greenwich Sts. 212-431-7466. May 24 at 8.)

DA CAPO CHAMBER PLAYERS
The members of the renowned new-music ensemble (featuring the cellist André Emelianoff) team up with some friends for a concert of pieces by Joan Tower ("Turning Points"), Steve Mackey, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 27 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"PERIPHERAL CITY:
REDISCOVERING THE GOWANUS CANAL"
As early as 1893, a major daily newspaper called the heavily polluted Gowanus an "open cesspool," but recently things have been changing. An ancient flushing tunnel was repaired four years ago, and the people of Brooklyn have started to see the canal as something other than a place to dump bodies. Its ecosystem now supports blue crabs, and wildflowers grow along its shores. For two upcoming weekends, a performance collective called Red Dive is offering hourly explorations aboard a pontoon boat. The tours feature oral histories of life along the canal as well as stops to view dance installations and a performance by the Gowanus Wildcats, a drill team comprised of school-age neighborhood girls. (May 24-26 and May 31-June 1, from noon to five. For more information, call 212-615-6797.)

READINGS
May 21 at 6:30: The writers Oliver Sacks, Roger Shattuck, Cynthia Ozick, and Dorothy Herman discuss the hundredth anniversary of the publication of Helen Keller's autobiography, "The Story of My Life." The actress Stockard Channing will read selected passages. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. 212-817-8215.) ♦ May 21 at 7:30: Paul Muldoon, Meryl Streep, Charles Simic, Maria Tucci, Sharon Olds, and other poets and actors read from the new American edition of the British anthology "Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times." (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628.) ♦ May 25 at 2: The poet Sam Hamill reads his translations of Basho's haikus. (A. T. White Memorial, Brooklyn Botanic Garden. For more information, call 718-623-7200.)

TALKS
May 21 at 6:30: In the second installment of a lecture series about the seven deadly sins, the scholar and cultural critic Michael Eric Dyson talks about pride. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-930-0571.) ♦ May 22 at 6:30: The artist Tony Oursler discusses the pioneering creations of Robert Whitman. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. 212-989-5566.) ♦ May 22 at 8: The historian Bernard Lewis remarks on the role jihad plays in shaping the global political environment. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

WALK
May 26 at 1: Big Onion Walking Tours visits the war monuments, battlefields, and anti-war protest sites of lower Manhattan. For more information, call 212-439-1090.

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MOVIES OPENING

BRUCE ALMIGHTY
A comedy with Jim Carrey as a local TV-news reporter who complains about his life so much that God (Morgan Freeman) decides to make him all-powerful. Also with Jennifer Aniston. Tom Shadyac directed. Opening May 23.

GIGANTIC (A TALE OF TWO JOHNS)
A documentary about John Flansburgh and John Linnell of They Might Be Giants, directed by AJ Schnack. Opening May 23. (Cinema Village.)

THE IN-LAWS
Andrew Fleming directed this remake of the 1979 comedy in which a mild-mannered podiatrist (Albert Brooks) discovers that his future son-in-law's father (Michael Douglas) is a C.I.A. operative. With Candice Bergen and Robin Tunney. Opening May 23.

RESPIRO
Emanuele Crialese's drama is set on Lampedusa, an island near Sicily, and tells the story of a mother of three (Valeria Golino) whose nonconformist behavior disturbs her small, conservative fishing community. In Italian. Opening May 23. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

L'AUBERGE ESPAGNOLE
The title of Cédric Klapisch's film means, in French slang, a free-for-all. This charming, utterly undramatic sketchbook movie is about a twenty-five-year-old Parisian graduate student, Xavier (Romain Duris), who goes to Spain as part of a European exchange program and lives with a polyglot mix of students in a cramped walkup apartment. The hero is instructed in lovemaking techniques by a lesbian roommate; he then has an affair with a luscious but vacuous married woman (Judith Godrèche). Not much happens, but the characters, searching for romance and good times, wander through Barcelona's handsome ochre streets, across the Gaudí pavilions and the sun-drenched piazzas; the movie is as much a love letter to the slowed-down erotic pleasures of the city as the New Wave films were to the endless social and intellectual enchantments of Paris. Shot with a lightweight digital camera, the movie, unimportant in itself, opens up possibilities for new, casual styles of filmmaking.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/19/03.) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM
A crowd-pleasing British movie devoted to the radical idea that girls can play soccer and sprain their ankles. Jess (Parminder Nagra) is a Sikh who hides her love of the game from her conservative parents, while Jules (Keira Knightley) is a tomboy who defies her English mother. Both have a thing for their Irish coach, Joe (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers)—he of the wounded knee and the watery eyes. The movie is a hodgepodge: nicely barbed scenes with Jess's family bump against weird practice montages that play like sports-bra ads. What it all adds up to is multicultural empowerment for the pre-teen shin-guard crowd.—*Michael Agger* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

DADDY DAY CARE
The promising premise of two out-of-work dads (Eddie Murphy and Jeff Garlin) who open up a "guy" day-care center sputters to a halt in this tepid comedy, clumsily directed by Steve Carr. The film is a series of pratfalls and toilet jokes aimed to please only the "Rugrats" demographic. Not even the considerable talents of Steve Zahn (as a gifted recruit who joins the staff) and Anjelica Huston (as the snooty mistress of a competing school) can save the day.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE DANCER UPSTAIRS
John Malkovich's premier effort as a movie director, an adaptation of Nicholas Shakespeare's 1995 novel about the hunt for a Shining Path terrorist in Peru, is at times rather vague. Malkovich rushes through some of his scenes, and his Spanish, French, and Argentinean actors fail to sound colloquial and relaxed in English. But the movie has a sinister atmosphere that begins to work on you. In the nameless capital city (i.e., Lima), cryptic, intimidating posters show up on the street and dead dogs with menacing signs around their necks are found hanging from lampposts. The revolutionaries are everywhere and nowhere, a murderously mischievous presence; they are like artists of revolution, staging their gruesome acts at their own convenience, and Malkovich doesn't prepare us for the horrors or underline them with ominous music. With Javier Bardem as the civilized policeman who pursues the terrorist for years and Laura Morante as a ballet teacher who may be involved in dangerous activities.—*D.D.* (5/5/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

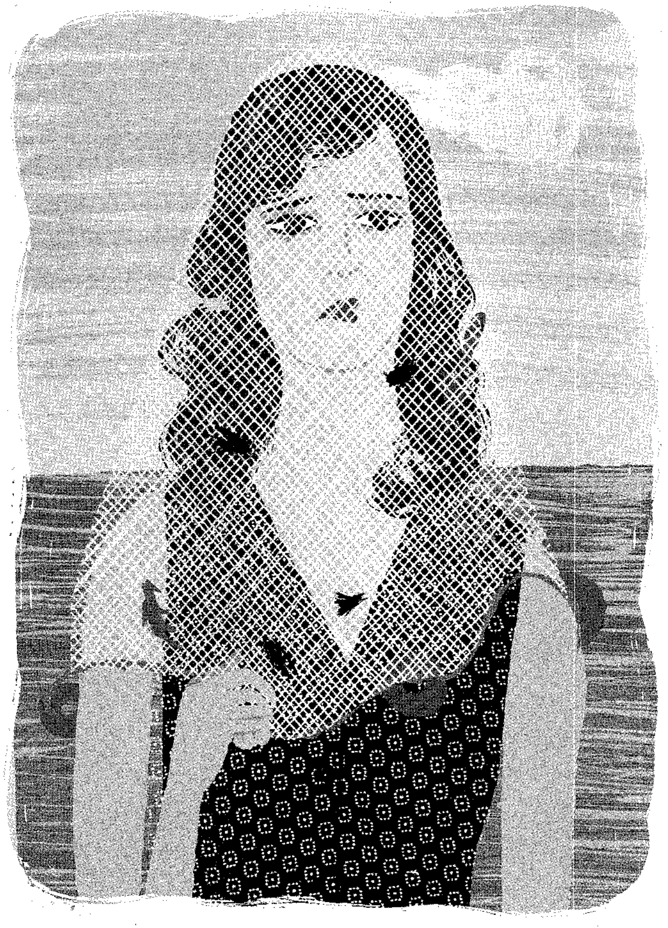
DOWN WITH LOVE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 62nd & Broadway, 34th Street Theatre, and Ziegfeld.)

DRACULA: PAGES FROM A VIRGIN'S DIARY
Guy Maddin, the director of "Careful," "Archangel," and the five-minute mini-masterpiece "The Heart of the World," among others, returns with a dizzying cinematic take on the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's production of Bram Stoker's classic. While transposing the ballet's interpretation from stage to screen, Maddin's phantasmagoric movie—which starts off as a silent black-and-white film set to the music of Gustav Mahler—becomes wildly, and erotically, exotic. Victorian sexuality and melodrama are brought together in a shadowy world of expressionistic images (flashlights pierce the dark in the shape of crosses, a trickle of blood moves across a map showing Dracula's progress) and an athletic, almost rabid, choreography. Maddin has discovered a new kind of cinema, the welding of silent-film techniques, avant-garde imagery, and twenty-first-century technology (there are digital effects smuggled in throughout the picture). This is one of his most consistent, vibrant films, and a perfect primer for exploring his other fantastic works.—*B.D.* (Film Forum.)

THE GODDESS
Paddy Chayefsky's attack on the American dream of stardom centers on an unloved child in the South who grows up incapable of loving and becomes a big empty wreck of a Marilyn Monroe-type star. This 1958 film takes a psychiatric and sociological view of her career: she's a pathetic creature who has been deceived by false values and is destroyed by the bitch-goddess Success. Chayefsky is so concerned with the heroine's pitifully unformed character that he fails to suggest what would make her stand out from all the other poor, deceived girls—what would make her a star. This is a conscientious, ambitious bad movie, with Chayefsky's famous ear for dialogue in full cauliflower. John Cromwell directed the high-powered cast. The intense Kim Stanley is in the central role (her compelling over-non-acting makes the bum writing rather painful). Patty Duke plays the heroine as the lonely child with no one to praise her; she informs her cat, "Kitty, I got promoted today"—a line that became a camp favorite. Steven Hill is the star's first husband; he's called upon to deliver the author's prophetic insights—i.e., the lines that should have been cut.—*Pauline Kael* (Gramercy Theatre; May 26.)

HOLES
Louis Sachar's entertaining children's novel is given a snappy, faithful treatment by the director Andrew Davis and his boisterous cast (which includes Sigourney Weaver, Jon Voight, and Shia LaBeouf). The story, about a young Texan boy unjustly sent to a work camp for delinquents, retains all the magic realism of the book (the author wrote the screenplay). Flashbacks to the Old West, deadly lizards, family curses—Davis combines all of the movie's disparate pieces with enormous skill. It's an emotional tall tale, intelligent and original.—*B.D.* (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

LILYA 4-EVER
Lilya (Oksana Akinshina) is a chirpy girl of sixteen, sunk in a stagnant backwater of what used to be the Soviet



Valeria Golino in "Respiro," opening May 23.

JOSÉ LUIS MERINO

MAGGIE SMITH

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survivor
has a
story.

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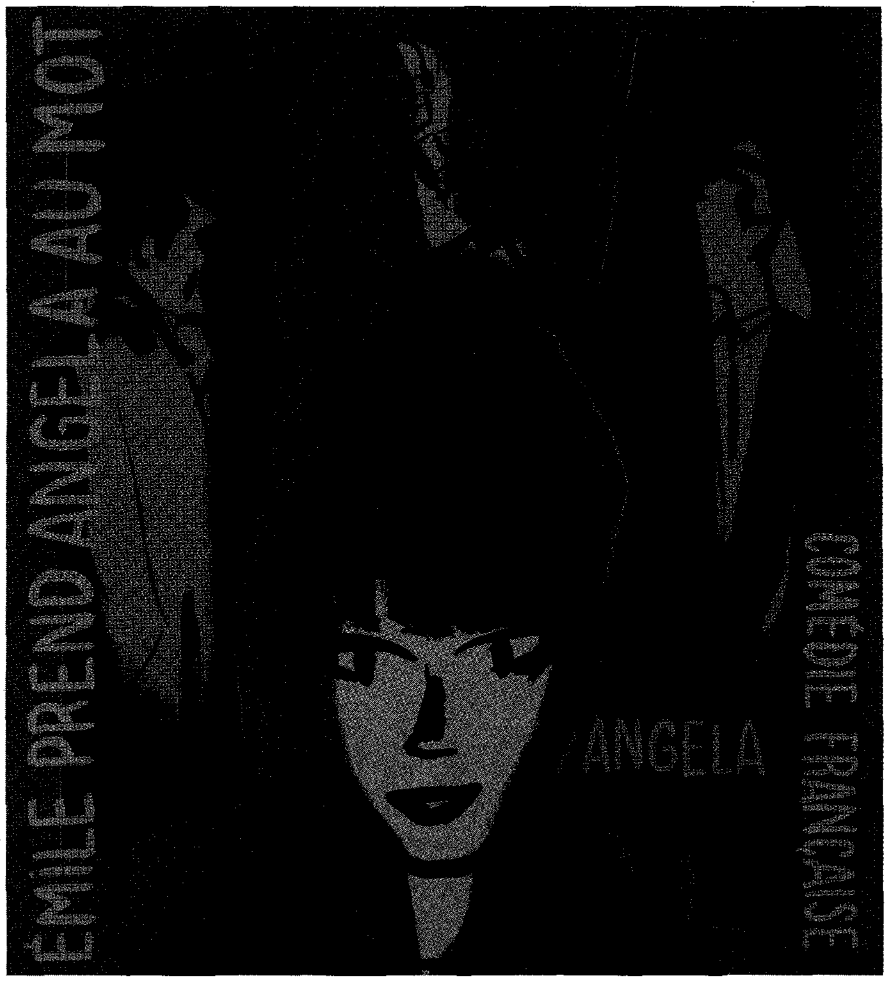
Union. She is, to all intents and purposes, orphaned when her witch of a mother abandons her to seek a life in America. Lilya starts with practically nothing and goes downhill from there, winding up selling her body to the vulpine patrons of a bar; what redeems the movie—what renders a squalid experience quite sacred in its intensity—is the vehemence with which the writer and director, Lukas Moodysson, asks whether his heroine has also sold her soul. The caustic portrait that he paints of his native Sweden, to which the deluded Lilya is transported in her quest for a future, has brought him both outrage and acclaim; what is beyond doubt is the brio of his storytelling and the branding of the girl's misfortune onto our hearts and nerves. With Artiom Bogucharski as the artless dodger who becomes her only friend. In German, Swedish, English, and Russian.—*Anthony Lane* (4/21 & 28/03) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



At Film Forum, Anna Karina in Jean-Luc Godard's "A Woman Is a Woman."

DUPUY-BERBERIAN

THE LIZZIE MCGUIRE MOVIE

After a successful cable-TV series and some bubbly children's radio hits, Disney's Miss Lizzie gets the green light for her own film. The effervescent tween-ager, sweetly portrayed by Hilary Duff, is a kiddie-pop phenomenon. The Disney studio, which markets as effectively as M-G-M in its heyday, is responsible for many teen sensations (Christina Aguilera, Justin Timberlake, and Britney Spears among them), and Duff is as professional as her predecessors, but with one major difference: she actually seems to be enjoying herself. The story takes her on a class trip to Rome, where a "Gidget"-like romance and a shot at pop-star fame are given a gentle going over. With its winsome, fairy-tale notions about life and love, the movie is just sweet enough.—*B.D.* (East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

MAN ON THE TRAIN

The French director Patrice Leconte, having flitted from one genre to the next with movies as different as "Ridicule" and "The Girl on the Bridge," has now settled on his most consoling subject: the comedy of good companionship. Johnny Hallyday (who was, in his time, France's answer to Elvis) plays Milan, a low-level hit man who arrives, at the bluish end of a day, in a small French town and accepts the offer of a room from Manesquier (Jean Rochefort), a retired schoolteacher. For an hour, not much happens, and we are granted the languorous—and, to many filmgoers, increasingly rare—pleasure of watching two people lock gently together. They even trade roles: Rochefort, the most playful melancholic in cinema, learns to fire a gun, while Hallyday takes up pipe and slippers. All of this is delectable: Leconte has a taste for minor, chewed-up lives, and you can't help sighing with regret as he gathers his wits and hurries the plot toward an unnecessary climax. In French.—*A.L.* (5/12/03) (Cinema 1 and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE MATRIX RELOADED

Neo (Keanu Reeves), the One, fights a courtyard of replicant Agent Smiths (Hugo Weaving), who are all in black suits and ties, in what is perhaps the wittiest digital spectacle yet, and there's a bumper-cars-on-the-freeway episode that outdoes all such previous scenes. But most of this sequel, written and directed by the brothers Larry and Andy Wachowski, is heavy-spirited and pompous, even faintly embarrassing. At Zion, the city deep within the earth where the free humans live (all the others, trapped in the simulated reality of "the Matrix," are controlled by machines), a boring multiethnic saturnalia goes on forever. The scenes of lovemaking between Reeves and Carrie-Anne Moss are pure dreamy kitsch (you can take your twelve-year-old); the various leaders stand around in robes and make speeches at each other in the mock-medieval gibberish that seems to have taken over mass culture ever since J. R. R. Tolkien unleashed it on the world. The movie has the portentous hollowness of so much bad sci-fi, in which the world is always about to end, but nothing else much matters, or makes any sense. The original, with its touch of the uncanny, has a special appeal for techno-geek teen-agers and perhaps for certain intellectuals who feel trapped in a corporate-controlled culture that they are powerless to fight. Instead, they turn themselves into hip theoreticians of simulated reality, an idea no more interesting than the gaga psychedelic fantasies of the sixties era. It's an unpleasant irony that the artistic value of "The Matrix" has been crushed by exactly the franchise-making mentality that admirers of the original hate the most.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

A MIGHTY WIND

The latest satirical documentary from the writer-director-actor Christopher Guest and his wonderful stock company. This one, set in the present day, is about a reunion of schlock commercial folksingers (of the Peter, Paul & Mary or Ian & Sylvia type) from the sixties, and though the movie is not as funny as "This Is Spinal Tap" or "Best in Show" it's brighter and more revivifying than anything else around these days. Guest's subjects, in all these films, are people from the drearier corners of show business who are so deep within whatever it is they do that they have lost all traces of self-consciousness. His films are, in the end, not so much mock documentaries as records of a deep-down dorkiness that becomes a form of blessedness. Guest is a realist who loves his subjects. With Eugene Levy, Catherine O'Hara, Michael McKean, Parker Posey, et al. Ed Begley, Jr., is particularly good as the Swedish-born public-television executive who drops Yiddish into every sentence in order to remain a success in New York.—*D.D.* (5/5/03) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC

One of the greatest of all movies. The director, Carl Dreyer, based the script on the trial records, and the testimony appears to be given for the first time. (Cocteau wrote that this 1928 film "seems like a historical document from an era in which the cinema didn't exist.") As the five gruelling cross-examinations follow each other, Dreyer turns the camera on the faces of Joan and the judges, and in giant closeups he reveals his interpretation of their emotions. In this enlargement Joan and her persecutors are shockingly fleshly—isolated with their sweat, warts, spittle, and tears, and (as no one used makeup) with startlingly individual contours, features, and skin. No other film has so subtly linked eroticism with religious persecution. Maria Falconetti's Joan may be the finest performance ever recorded on film. With Eugene Silvain as Cauchon, Michel Simon, André Berley, Maurice Schutz, and the young Antonin Artaud—as Massieu he's the image of passionate idealism.—*P.K.* (Florence Gould Hall; May 27.)

RAISING VICTOR VARGAS

A lovely small-scale comedy about the commonplace mating rituals in a Dominican section of Manhattan. It's summer, and everyone is on the prowl, but the neighborhood is friendly and peaceful; chickens run through the alleys, and small gardens pop up here and there among the projects. The boys act cocky even when they're unsure of themselves, and the girls pretend they don't need boys. Nothing very important happens, but, moment by moment, the movie is alive with the play of gestures and glances, the faces of aggression and withdrawal. Victor Rasuk is well cast as the good-looking local Casanova, perhaps eighteen years old, and Judy Marte is the wary young beauty who gets him to change his style. The writer-director Peter Sollett stays close to the actors, all nonprofessionals, and they greet the camera with a modest but exploratory willingness.—*D.D.* (3/31/03) (Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE SHAPE OF THINGS
The latest Neil LaBute exercise in scorn and betrayal, in which people who don't belong together in the first place tear each other apart. These quarrels are supposed to reveal the drives and jealousies beneath the surface of companionship, but the LaBute movies (including "In the Company of Men" and "Your Friends & Neighbors") are redolent of the kind of self-important Off Broadway play in which antagonism on the stage can charge up an audience. In this one, a graduate student in art, Evelyn (Rachel Weisz), a fire-breathing free spirit, unaccountably takes up with an overweight and maladroit undergraduate, Adam (Paul Rudd). Evelyn reshapes Adam, changing his body, his hair, his walk, his nose, convincing him that he's attractive, and soon he *is* attractive, which causes a great deal of trouble between two undergraduate friends of Adam's (Frederick Weller and Gretchen Mol) who are about to get married. The movie, in the end, is about the misuse of sexual power and the cannibalizing nature of artists, but mostly it consists of endless, nagging dialogue scenes among remarkably dislikable people.—*D.D.* (5/19/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

SOYLENT GREEN
The final entry in Charlton Heston's macho-campy end-of-the-world trilogy (way below "Planet of the Apes" but classier than "The Omega Man"), this dogged 1973 tale of overpopulation in the year 2022 is an M-G-M version of a midnight movie: it both puts you to sleep and induces nightmares. Tough-cop Heston investigates the murder of a food-monopoly director (Joseph Cotten) and beds the dead man's "furniture" (a mistress that comes with an apartment, played by Leigh Taylor-Young). Meanwhile, Edward G. Robinson, as Heston's police researcher, makes disquieting discoveries about the nutrition industry. The director Richard Fleischer has done far better work, but in some fluky way his unimaginative technique suits this quotidian apocalypse, where crowds live on stairwells and swelter through an endless greenhouse-effect summer. Robinson really is heroic in his final performance, as a man who decides he's seen enough, and Stanley R. Greenberg's script gives Heston a juicy tag line ("Soylent Green is people!") that provided comedy-club impressionists with a surefire laugh-getter for decades to come.—*Michael Sragow* (Thalia Theatre; May 24-25.)

SPELLBOUND
Jeffrey Blitz's charming documentary follows eight elementary students competing in the 1999 National Spelling Bee; he rode the bus to school with them, interviewed their teachers, checked out their rooms, and, in one case, listened while a kid talked like a robot. The sample of children is appropriately diverse—in region, in race, in the intensity of their preparations. Some of their parents see the spelling bee as representing the immigrant dream of America in miniature, while others seem amazed at the intensity of their nerdy offspring. The competitions are tense, and Blitz cobbles together a series of heartbreaking reaction shots of errant spellers. His direction shows a clever, occasionally flippant, selection of detail—the dog-eared unabridged dictionaries, the congratulatory sign posted outside Hooters, the prodigy who signs his autographs "Trust in Jesus."—*M.A.* (Film Forum and Kew Gardens Cinema.)

X2
This is the sequel to "X-Men," Bryan Singer's sleek saga of extravagantly gifted humanoids known as mutants. Early grosses suggest that Singer has repeated his success, and that there may be further installments to come. But does the source material suit an extended franchise? The plotting seems dangerously self-interested, being concerned almost exclusively with the survival of the mutants themselves, and, behind the succulent effects, the tone is oddly hectoring, instructing us to behave liberally toward these nice boys and girls whose only quirk is the ability to create thunderstorms or hurl fire. Also, the need for fresh mutants will soon overcrowd the screen. Hugh Jackman, as Wolverine, is one of the few who emerge from the picture with their dignity enhanced; by contrast, Anna Paquin, Halle Berry, and even Ian McKellen are cruelly underused. With Alan Cumming, enjoying himself to a quite illicit degree as a Teutonic devil, and Brian Cox as a neo-con mutant-hunter, whose goatee may be the most villainous effect of all.—*A.L.* (5/12/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

BLUE CAR
Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3.
CINEMANIA
Cinema Village.
CITY OF GOD (1/20/03)
Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.
LAUREL CANYON (3/10/03)
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.
NOWHERE IN AFRICA
Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.
ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE
Empire 25.
SWEET SIXTEEN
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
WINGED MIGRATION
Paris.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (212-334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through May 25: "Czech Horror and Fantasy on Film." All films are in Czech. May 24 at 2: "The Fifth Horseman Is Fear" (1964, Zbynek Brynych). ♦ May 24 at 4:30: "The Cremator" (1968, Juraj Herz). ♦ May 25 at 2: "Morgiana" (1971, Herz). ♦ May 25 at 4:15: "Invisible/The Damned House of Hajn" (1988, Jiri Svoboda). ♦ Repertory nights. May 24-25 at 6:30: "Fellini's Roma" (1972, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Through May 27: "Miike! Miike! Miike!" The films of the Japanese director. May 22-27 at 7 and 9:30: "Ichi the Killer" (2001; in Japanese). ♦ Through May 26: "Asian Films Are Go!!!," contemporary films from Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Thailand. See www.subwaycinema.com for a schedule.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—May 21-27 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "A Woman Is a Woman" (1961, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-315-6160)—Through June 24: Joan of Arc films. May 27 at 12:30 and 6:30: "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (†). ♦ May 27 at 3:30 and 9: "My Life to Live" (1962, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through May 25: Films supported by the Hubert Bals Fund. May 22 at 3: "Japón" (2002, Carlos Reygadas; in Spanish). ♦ May 22 at 6: "Chronicle of a Disappearance" (1996, Elia Suleiman; in Arabic, French, and Hebrew). ♦ May 22 at 8 and May 23 at 3: "Fallen from Heaven" (1990, Francisco Lombardi; in Spanish). ♦ May 23 at 6 and May 24 at 8: "Occident" (2002, Christian Mungiu; in Romanian). ♦ May 23 at 8: "The Postman" (1994, He Jianjun; in Mandarin). ♦ May 24 at 1: "Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks, Part 1" (2003, Wang Bing; in Mandarin). ♦ May 24 at 6: "Crane World" (1999, Pablo Trapero; in Spanish). ♦ May 25 at 2: "Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks, Part 2" (2003, Bing; in Mandarin). ♦ May 25 at 6: "Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks, Part 3" (2003, Bing; in Mandarin). ♦ Through June 2: "Movie Love in the Fifties," a series in celebration of the book by James Harvey. May 26 at 2: "The Goddess" (†). ♦ May 26 at 4: "Middle of the Night" (1959, Delbert Mann). ♦ May 26 at 6:30: "Angel Face" (1952, Otto Preminger). ♦ May 26 at 8:30: "Out of the Past" (1947, Jacques Tourneur).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. May 23-25: "The Apple" (1980, Menaham Golan).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through July 13: Sci-Fi Flick Fest. May 24 at 1 and May 25 at 7: "Cocoon" (1985, Ron Howard). ♦ May 24 at 3:15 and May 25 at 9:15: "Soylent Green" (†). ♦ May 24 at 5:30 and May 25 at 1: "A.I." (2001, Steven Spielberg). ♦ May 24 at 8:15 and May 25 at 3:45: "Minority Report" (2002, Spielberg).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through May 29: "Films from Along the Silk Road." The movies are listed with their country of origin. May 21 at 1, May 23 at 7:10, May 24 at 1 and 9, and May 25 at 7: "The Sky of Our Childhood" (1967, Tolomush Okeev; Kyrgyzstan). ♦ May 21 at 3 and 7, May 22 at 1, and May 24 at 5: "The Flight of the Bee" (1998, Jamshed Usmonov; Tadjikistan). ♦ May 21 at 5 and 9, May 23 at 1 and 9, and May 24 at 3: "The Fierce One" (1973, Okeev; Kyrgyzstan). ♦ May 22 at 8:30 and May 23 at 5: "The Swing" (1993, Aktan Abdikalikov; Kyrgyzstan). ♦ May 23 at 3 and May 25 at 1: "Man Follows Birds" (1975, Ali Khamraev; Uzbekistan). ♦ May 24 at 7: "Angel on the Right" (2002, Jamshed Usmonov; Tadjikistan). ♦ May 25 at 3, May 26 at 1, and May 27 at 1:30: "Without Fear" (1972, Khamraev; Uzbekistan). ♦ May 25 at 5 and May 27 at 3:45: "Last Holiday" (1996, Amir Karakulov; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 26 at 3 and 6:30: "The Daughter-In-Law" (1972, Khodjakuli Narliev; Turkmenistan). ♦ May 26 at 4:45 and 8:30: "The Last Stop" (1989, Serik Aprimov; Kazakhstan).

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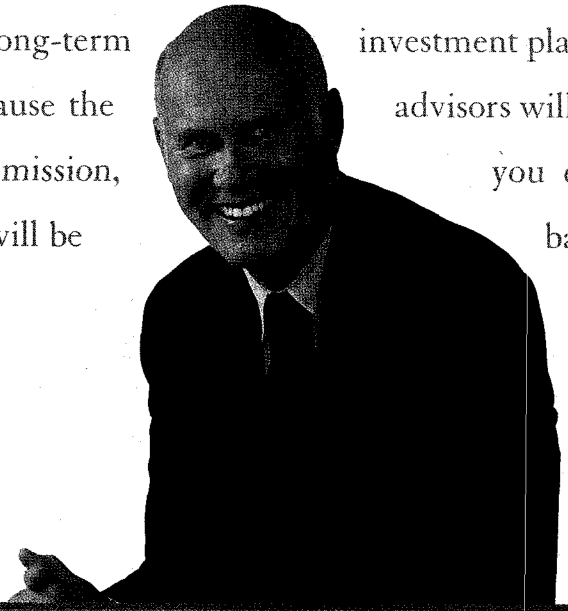

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
L'AFFAIRE BLAIR

In “The Fabulist: A Novel,” published last week by Simon & Schuster, Stephen Glass, once a young star writer for *The New Republic*, who, in 1998, was fired for fabricating a spectacular series of stories, tells the story of “Stephen Glass,” a young star writer for “*The Washington Weekly*,” who gets fired for fabricating a spectacular series of stories. Like Stephen Glass, “Stephen Glass” fakes not only the stories but also the notes and documentation to back them up, the better to fool his magazine’s editors and its fact checker, Victoria. Victoria maintains a “rulebook,” which begins like this:

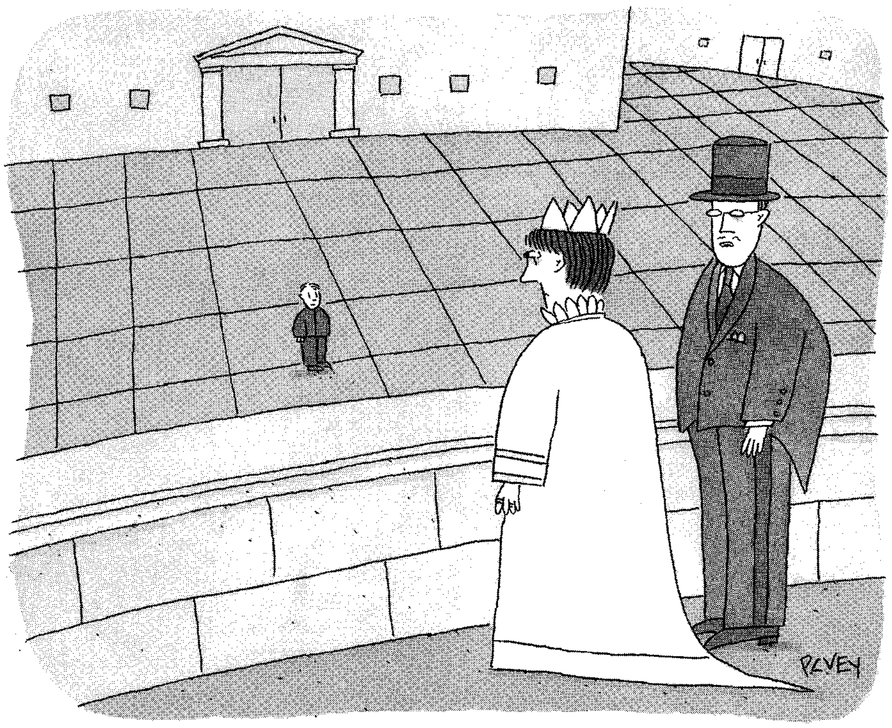
> ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF VERIFICATION,
> IN ORDER OF PRIORITY
>
> 1. *The New York Times*—the gold standard.

Whether as journalist, novelist, or character, Stephen Glass gets almost everything wrong—sometimes on purpose, sometimes because he just can’t help it. But he got that one right. The *Times* remains the most important and, on balance, the best newspaper in the world. Its authority—slowly earned in the course of the century and a half since its founding, and especially the hundred and seven years since its purchase by Adolph S. Ochs, the great-grandfather of the present publisher, Arthur Ochs Sulzburger, Jr.—isn’t just journalistic; it’s downright ontological. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the *Times* defines public reality. Although newspaper readership in general is in decline, the *Times’s* circulation has been growing; it now stands at well over a million, half of which is accounted for by its national edition. The paper’s overseas subsidiary, the *International Herald Tribune*, and its excellent Web site give it global reach. So when the *Times* makes a mistake—a big mistake, a ghastly mistake, a mistake that seems to compromise the soul of its mission—that’s not just news. It’s meta-news.

It’s also, apparently, mega-news. A week ago Sunday, the *Times* unloaded a tale of journalistic malfeasance that began on the front page and jumped inside to four full broadsheet pages—some fourteen thousand words in all. In its gray bulk and solemn presentation (“an investigation by *Times* journalists has found . . .”), it resembled one of those multi-bylined “special reports” that Dave Barry once remarked ought to come affixed with the label “Caution! Journalism Prize Entry! Do Not Read!” Half of this behemoth consisted of a chronicle of the misbehavior of a young reporter, Jayson Blair, and of his editors’ actions and (more often) inaction in response. The other half was a catalogue of specifics, examining thirty-nine articles by Blair that had been published during the previous three years and sorting his transgressions into categories like “Plagiarism,” “Factual Errors,” “Whereabouts” (Blair often faked his datelines, using e-mail and his cell phone to conceal the fact that he was still in New York, concocting descriptions of people and places with the help of the Internet and the *Times’s* own photo archive), “Denied Reports,” and (in one instance) “Fabrications.” Much of this stuff, from a reader’s point of view, was trivial. When a reporter misidentifies the Historic Greater Friendship Baptist Church as the Historical Greater Friendship Baptist Church (especially when, as the catalogue goes on to note, the name is “rendered correctly later in the article”), the reader still gets the idea. When a reporter steals a quote from a rival’s story, as Blair often did, the reader is misled about the enterpris-

The New York Times

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"Him? He's the guy who would actually vote for you if we lived in a democracy."

• •

ingness and honesty of the reporter but not, or not necessarily, about the accuracy or significance of what the quotee has said. Perhaps the most consequential of Blair's fabulisms came in a story last October about the Washington-area sniper case, in which he asserted that a federal prosecutor had snatched a suspect out of an interrogation just as he was about to confess. That report, which the *Times* played as a page-one scoop, traduced the reputations of individuals and institutions.

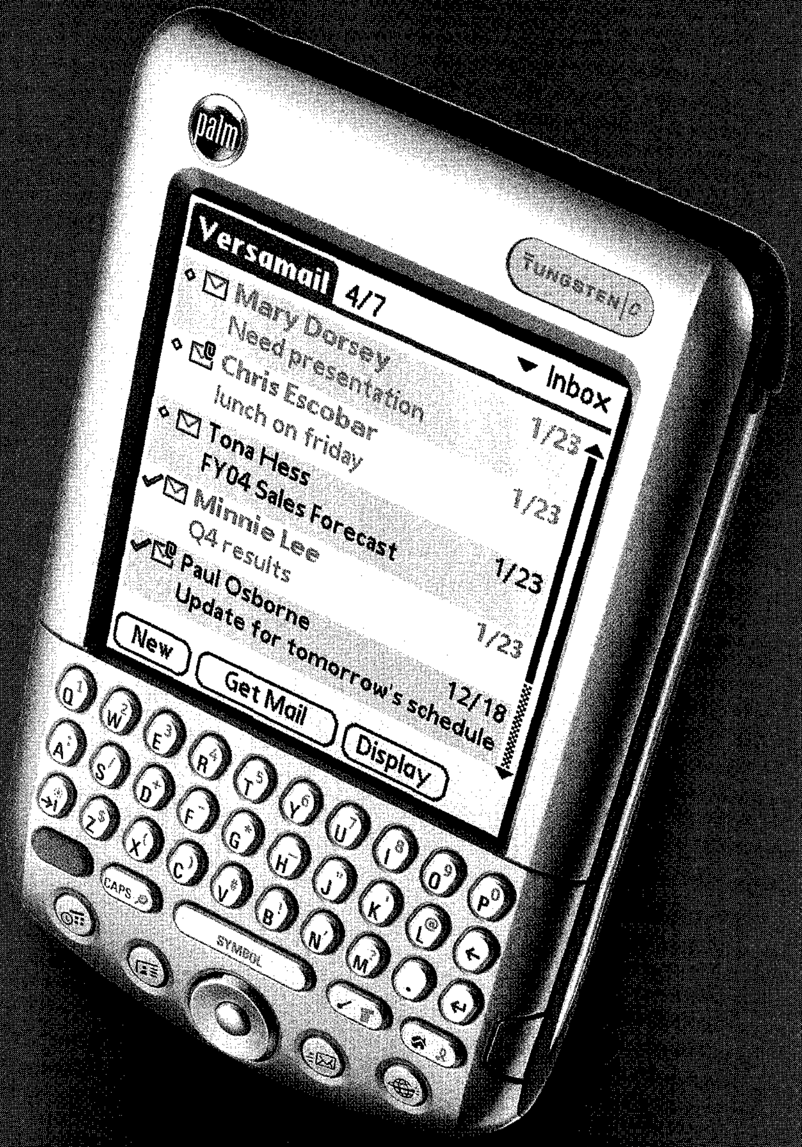
The ultra-sophisticated view of the *Times's* self-accounting is that it was overblown. Four full newspaper pages—isn't that a little too much information about the dismissal of a mid-level employee at corporation No. 486 in the Fortune 500? Wasn't this an act of self-aggrandizement dressed as contrition? Actually, that analysis applies better to Glass and his solipsistic novel, in which every character—including the sole sympathetic one, "Glass"—is cut from cardboard, and which seems to view apology as a for-profit industry with a launch interview on "60 Minutes." (Glass's nonfictional fiction lacks the imaginative flair of his fictional nonfiction. Perhaps he should try fictional fiction, or just forget the whole thing and practice law.)

The *Times's* report stirred memories of the last time a major paper had to deal with deliberate journalistic misconduct on such a scale. That was in 1981, at the Washington *Post*, when a young reporter named Janet Cooke—like Blair, a charming, charismatic, twenty-something-year-old—won a Pulitzer Prize for a story about an eight-year-old heroin addict who, it turned out, did not exist. The *Post's* catharsis, like the *Times's* twenty-two years later, reflected its particular journalistic style to the point of stereotype. The *Post*, known as a writer's paper, assigned the task to one person, Bill Green, a Duke University official who was serving as the paper's ombudsman, or internal watchdog. Green's report, the same length as the entire *Times* package, was almost pure narrative. It was full of suspense, color, dialogue, and melodrama, rendered in prose that approached the pulpy. ("Milton Coleman"—city editor then, deputy managing editor now—"is a rangy, tall man. His quietness is deceptive. He pursues news as though it's his quarry, and admiring colleagues regard him as highly competitive. When he sits, he sprawls. He likes to work in a vest.") The *Times's* approach was to "flood the zone," in a favorite phrase of Howell Raines, the executive editor, who is an admirer of Bear Bryant, the late Alabama football coach. Five reporters and two researchers put the story together, and the writing is as bureaucratic as the method. ("The paper, concerned about maintaining its integrity among readers, tells its journalists to follow many guidelines as described in a memo on the newsroom's internal Web site.")

In both cases, what was more startling than the reporters' pathology was the degree to which so many warnings of disaster were ignored by so many editors of experience, including the papers' top leadership. Both papers acknowledged this; but the *Post's* Green, it must be said, did so with greater candor and in greater depth than the *Times's* team. In both cases, the people at the top said the right things about accepting responsibility. At the *Post*, at least one head eventually rolled—but it rolled sideways, and it quickly rejoined its body and resumed its upward trajectory. (The head was that of Bob Woodward, who lost his job as metropolitan editor. He was immediately made assistant managing editor for investigations, the job he still holds.) Whether there will be even such non-Draconian consequences at the *Times* remains to be seen.

Last Wednesday, the *Times* held an emotional, sometimes bitter staff meeting in a movie theatre across the street. (It was closed to the press, including the *Times* reporter assigned to cover it, who was the only *Times* person barred from entry. He got his information the same way his colleagues from other news organizations did—at second hand. Such are the folkways of big-time journalism.) During the meeting, there were complaints that Raines, in his twenty months on the job, had proved forbidding, autocratic, and inaccessible, had played favorites, had ruled by fear, and had lost the trust of much of the newsroom. The executive editor apparently absorbed these painful charges and promised to do all he could to set things right. These are issues for Raines, Sulzberger, Gerald Boyd (the managing editor), and

TUNGSTEN | C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IN THE ZONE

WIRELESS NET ACCESS

BY P. BRAD SMITH

Would it make you jealous to know that while you're tied to the computer in your office, your co-worker may be sitting under a shady tree or some other equally refreshing spot, working away on a laptop or Palm handheld connected to the office network? Well, don't be envious, a perk such as this can also be yours.

The ability to work from virtually anywhere is made possible by a increasingly popular wireless technology known as Wi-Fi, which stands for "wireless fidelity." Wi-Fi provides high-speed data connections to the Internet or computer networks. It has become the latest hot technology, partly because it's inexpensive and easy to use.

One of the most common habitats of Wi-Fi is within an enterprise where employees cannot always work from their desks. Such businesses are likely to deploy wireless local area networks (LANs) either as separate data networks or as complements to a wired LAN. Several studies have reported improved worker productivity when employees are able to work from anywhere.

Another place you're seeing Wi-Fi is in a growing number of "hot spots." These are public places like airports, hotel lobbies, convention centers, and coffee shops. With Wi-Fi you can surf the Internet, answer E-mail, and, with the use of a virtual private network (VPN), access your company's intranet. Gartner, a computer technology research company, has forecast that there will be a hundred thousand of these hot spots across the U.S. within five years.

A third venue for Wi-Fi use is in the home, where it can be set up for about two hundred dollars and will provide Internet access while subscribers watch TV or sit on their decks.

Many hot spots are being set up as for-profit businesses that charge hourly, daily, or monthly fees. But there are an increasing number that are free. In Manhattan, free Wi-Fi access has been available for a year in Bryant Park behind the main branch of the New York Public Library on Forty-second Street. And, starting this spring, a project of the Alliance for Downtown New York will offer similar service in at least seven parks and plazas in Lower Manhattan. All you need in order to connect to one of these networks is a PC card for a laptop that costs about fifty dollars, although many laptops and other devices, like the new Palm Tungsten C, have Wi-Fi built in.

The Tungsten C is among Palm's most powerful handhelds with a 400 MHz Intel processor, a whopping sixty-four megabytes of memory, a high-resolution display screen that supports more than sixty-five thousand colors, a web browser, a voice jack for recording, an integrated keyboard, and a VPN client.

Bryant Park, where the typical user spends an hour or more, expects more than a hundred daily users this summer, according to Jerome Barth, the park's director of operations. Why is the park's Wi-Fi network free? "We thought about it, and we decided we wanted the network to fit within the feel of everything else in the park," says Barth. "We want people to come to the park, and once they are here we want them to stay. If the Wi-Fi connections weren't free, we would restrict our objectives."

America's love of E-mail is one of the main reasons for Wi-Fi's popularity. A recent report by Ken Dulaney, Gartner's vice president of mobile computing, estimated that wireless E-mail can boost a worker's productivity by ten per cent. For example, work assignments are typically issued by E-mail, and the task can be delayed if the assignment is not received immediately.

Desmond Fuller, IT director for iBiquity Digital in Columbia, Maryland, knows the value of wireless E-mail. If there's a problem with iBiquity's networks, he often gets the call to fix it. Fuller uses a new Palm Tungsten C, which in addition to built-in Wi-Fi has a VPN client for corporate access. Fuller can monitor the network anywhere he has Wi-Fi access.

Earlier this year, Fuller and his wife were sitting in a coffee shop when he was suddenly alerted to a network problem. "I was able to get on the Web and fix it right from there," says Fuller with satisfaction, thankful that he did not have to drive back to the office to complete the task instead.

P. Brad Smith writes about wireless technology for *Wireless Week*. His work has also appeared in *Red Herring* and *Fortune*.

the staff of the paper to resolve. The health of the *Times* depends on their doing so.

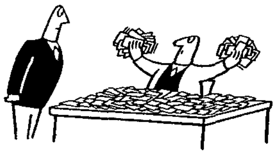
Like Janet Cooke (and Gerald Boyd), Jayson Blair is African-American. And, like the *Post*, the *Times* is a socially liberal institution, owned by a public-spirited family sensitive to the imperative of racial justice. The role of race in the present fiasco is anything but clear. But the first instinct of the *Times's* executives was to deny absolutely that it had played any role whatsoever. That was absurd. At the meeting, however, according to the *Times*, Raines said, "I believe in aggressively providing hiring and career opportunities for minorities." A moment later, he added, "Does that mean I personally favored Jayson? Not consciously. But you have a right to ask if I, as a white man from Alabama, with those convictions, gave him one chance too many by not stopping his appointment to the sniper team. When I look into my heart for the truth of that, the answer is yes."

To the extent that Raines finds himself guilty of big-heartedness, of course, he can find himself innocent of boneheadedness. Still, it is a fact that the *Times's* commitment to diversity has been exemplary. It compares favorably with that of almost every other media organization, present company included. This is not the place to rehearse the arguments in favor of affirmative action, or to review the two hundred and fifty years of slavery, followed by a hundred years of racial oppression, that lie behind those arguments. But affirmative action is strong medicine, and, as with any strong medicine, no great distance separates the therapeutic dose from the toxic one. It demands close monitoring of its institutional side effects. At the *Times*—in this instance, to a degree not yet fully understood—that monitoring seems to have failed.

The *Times* lamented, in its special report, that Blair's (and the *Times's*) "widespread fabrication and plagiarism represent a profound betrayal of trust and a low point in the 152-year history of the newspaper." Still, the harm to the common weal inflicted by Blair's banal lies amounted to rather less than, say, the harm done by the Pulitzer Prize-winning whitewash of Stalin's terror perpetrated by Walter Duranty, the paper's longtime Moscow correspondent, or, for that matter, the more recent harm done by its obtuse, petty, and wrongheaded obsession with the Clinton non-scandal known as Whitewater. The gravest damage of l'affaire Blair has been to the newspaper itself—and less to its public reputation than to its internal soundness, which is ultimately of greater importance. The health of the New York *Times*, as much as that of any single private institution in the land, is crucial to the health of the state, and to the state of public and political life in America. An outsider may be permitted to hope that the meeting at the movie house will be the beginning of a recovery. "When you make a mistake," Bear Bryant liked to say, "there are only three things you should ever do about it: admit it, learn from it, and don't repeat it."

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

CHECKS AND BALANCES
A DOLLAR, A DREAM



Budget crises are traditionally good news for gamblers. Determined not to raise taxes in the face of a severe deficit that promises unpopular spending cuts—zoos and firehouses closed, garbage and schoolchildren left behind—Governor George Pataki last week proposed that the city install video slot machines in its Off-Track Betting parlors. Aspiring millionaires would be spared having to ride the A train to the far reaches of Queens to play the slots at Aqueduct racetrack—which were themselves approved during the previous budget crisis, in 2001—and the state treasury would take in a few hundred million bucks. Everybody wins. But what would a solution be without a spoilsport? "There's no free lunch in life, and I think one of the problems of using gambling as a way to balance the budget is that it has a cost," Mayor Michael Bloomberg said last month to the aptly named radio host John Gambling.

When it comes to budget balancing, however, the best innovations often turn up in statehouses far from Albany. As it happens, a progressive assemblyman in Arkansas addressed his own state's budget shortfall this year by proposing a different kind of gambling bill—one that would set aside three thousand dollars annually for the state itself to play the lottery. That is, Arkansas would buy lottery tickets in other states, with the idea that a well-ordered sequence of birthday and wedding-anniversary dates might, with some luck, fill the coffers in Little Rock. "For the few remaining states, like Arkansas, too righteous to establish their own lotteries, investing in lotteries is merely taking advantage of other states' immorality," Jim Lendall, the bill's author, explained. (Arkansas's governor would be entrusted with the responsibility of buying the tickets—and, presumably, of selecting the lucky digits.) "We, as legislators, must look at creative ways to meet the demands by the public for state services."

Lendall, who is a registered nurse in addition to being a state assemblyman, is not exactly Bill Bennett (among other things, he is a liberal Democrat who has a long beard and hair falling below his shoulders), but he knows firsthand the value of a good bet. He keeps a jar of pocket change by his front door, and when he leaves town for more permissive precincts he empties the jar so he can pump the slots. A few years ago, on a trip to New Orleans, he won two thousand dollars. ("Actually, it was off somebody else's money. I had run out of quarters, but I saw another machine that was blinking, so I pushed the button before I left—and I won!")

The Arkansas legislature wasn't quite convinced, apparently, and the lottery bill died in committee, but word of Lendall's ingenuity has spread quickly through the statehouse rumor mill. At a recent meeting of the National Conference of State Legislators, in Boston, Lendall was greeted by a large group of new admirers from around the country. "They told me they thought it was one of the most novel ways to raise money," he said last week. "At a time when services are being cut and people are losing jobs, a similar argument can be made in every state."

For instance, instead of complaining about free-riding commuters from Connecticut, Mayor Bloomberg could have joined dozens of his fellow New Yorkers earlier this month and caught the Metro-North to Greenwich, and waited in line for a Powerball ticket. The jackpot topped out at eighty-nine million the other day, which, though not enough to equal the projected gains of Bloomberg's ill-fated commuter tax, would have saved Matara, the pregnant baboon in the Prospect Park Zoo, and Otis the Coyote, over in Flushing, with enough left over to keep more firefighters on the job (and away from the slots).

Or here's a better idea: Pataki and Bloomberg could invite Lendall and his fans from the conference for a visit. Our out-of-state guests could take advantage of New York's well-established immorality and invest their voters' money not only in the New York Lottery but also in the horses at Aqueduct, and even in the new casinos slated to open in the Catskills. They balance their budgets, we balance ours. Everybody wins.

—*Ben McGrath*

THE PICTURES
NOVELIZATION

Robert Cort, at the age of fifty-six, is the beau ideal of a certain kind of nearly vanished Hollywood producer. At lunch recently, in his customary booth at Morton's, in West Hollywood, he wore white silk trousers, a green nail-head jacket, and a Franck Muller wrist-watch the size of a hard-boiled egg. Beneath a jester's cap of curly brown hair, his face was tanned a color only George Hamilton's mother could love.

After serving as an executive at Columbia and Fox in the seventies and eighties, Cort produced dozens of popular movies, including "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" and "Mr. Holland's Opus." When he turned fifty, he said, he found himself "trying to figure out what I'd accomplished and what I hadn't, what my career had been about and what this town was about." Rather than following the traditional three-act structure of a Hollywood midlife crisis (Humvee; Botox; A.A.), Cort went the other way. While continuing to produce films, such as "Save the Last Dance," he began writing a book called "The Second Act," a history of the film business from 1948 to the present.

"The thesis was that in order to survive the enormous assaults on the business the people in it wound up selling their souls," Cort said. With his keen sense of what an audience wants, he quickly realized that no one would read such a book. So he decided to turn it into a novel. The result, called "Action!," is about the outsized passions of dozens of real-life colleagues, including Robert Evans, Julia Phillips, and Sam Kinison. Random House will publish the novel next month, but it is already being anxiously read in the film community. (To insure market saturation, Cort had a thousand extra galley copies printed, at his own expense.)

The hero of "Action!" is a producer named A. J. Jastrow, a slightly older, bolder, and sexier version of the author. A.J. turns up wherever the historically revealing excitement is. There is, for instance, a hotel-room encounter with Romy Schneider, the Austrian star of "What's New, Pussycat?":

> She massaged the carpet with her toes. "I ought to be . . . punished . . . for what I did."
> "Punished how?"
> Romy spoke barely above a whisper. "The way all bad girls are punished."

"I had a thing for Romy Schneider," Cort explained. (Schneider died in 1982.) "I spoke to her publicist the other day, and she said, 'Romy was so promiscuous, but I didn't know she was into spanking.' I said, 'Well, I talked to some people who knew her and somebody specified that.' She said, 'It makes total sense to me.' " He went on, "Even when Romy's asking to be spanked, she's servicing her own fantasies and controlling the relationship. It's all about having the upper hand, which is unfortunately the case when you're involved with an actor."

Near the end of the book, A.J. and his wife have dinner with Michael Eisner, the chairman of Disney:

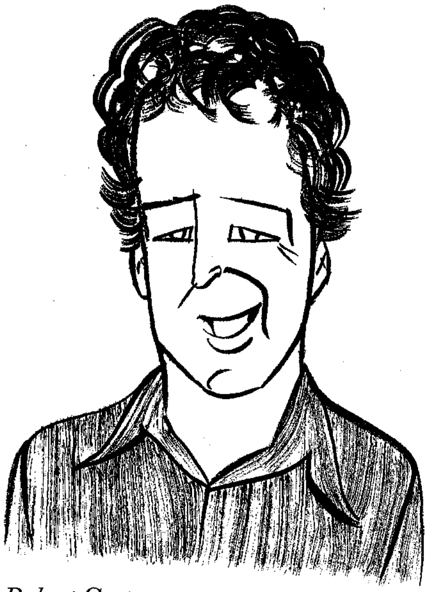
> His wife massaged her temples. "Does Michael talk about anything other than business?"
> "Never."
> "And the one-upsmanship . . . my God."

"That was my experience with Michael," Cort said. "He did not want to make 'Cocktail' "—another of Cort's films—"at all. He said, 'You know what's wrong with this thing? I don't want to have dinner with Tom Cruise's character.' Hey, you know what, Michael? Tom Cruise's character wouldn't want to have dinner with *you!* These people, at that level, business is their life." (A Disney spokesman says that Eisner did want to make "Cocktail"; he just felt that the character "should have some higher aspirations, along the lines of going to night school.")

During the half century covered by the book, industry protocol devolves from collegial backstabbing to outrages worthy of the House of Atreus. "The major premise of the book," Cort said, "is that A.J.'s father knows right from wrong and always does right, A.J. knows the difference but wiggles, and A.J.'s son, who becomes a studio executive, is essentially amoral. That's when you get to Mike Ovitz."

Ovitz, the former head of Creative Artists Agency and the short-lived Artists Management Group, is Cort's most villainous real-life character. A "tapioca-face" Iago, Ovitz blithely lures clients away from the dying boss of William Morris and seems incapable of honesty: "The former agent spoke with such utter conviction that it took Richard a moment to grasp that every word was a lie."

"I know from whence I speak," Cort said. For eight years, his wife, Rosalie Swedlin, was one of Ovitz's chief deputies at C.A.A. "Mike was a ruthless man. Nothing I've characterized in the book didn't happen to many people many times. In his time, you were well-served to be represented by C.A.A. But, like so many people in this world, he was walking around with a self-destruct button. And eventually, almost without exception, they all punch it."

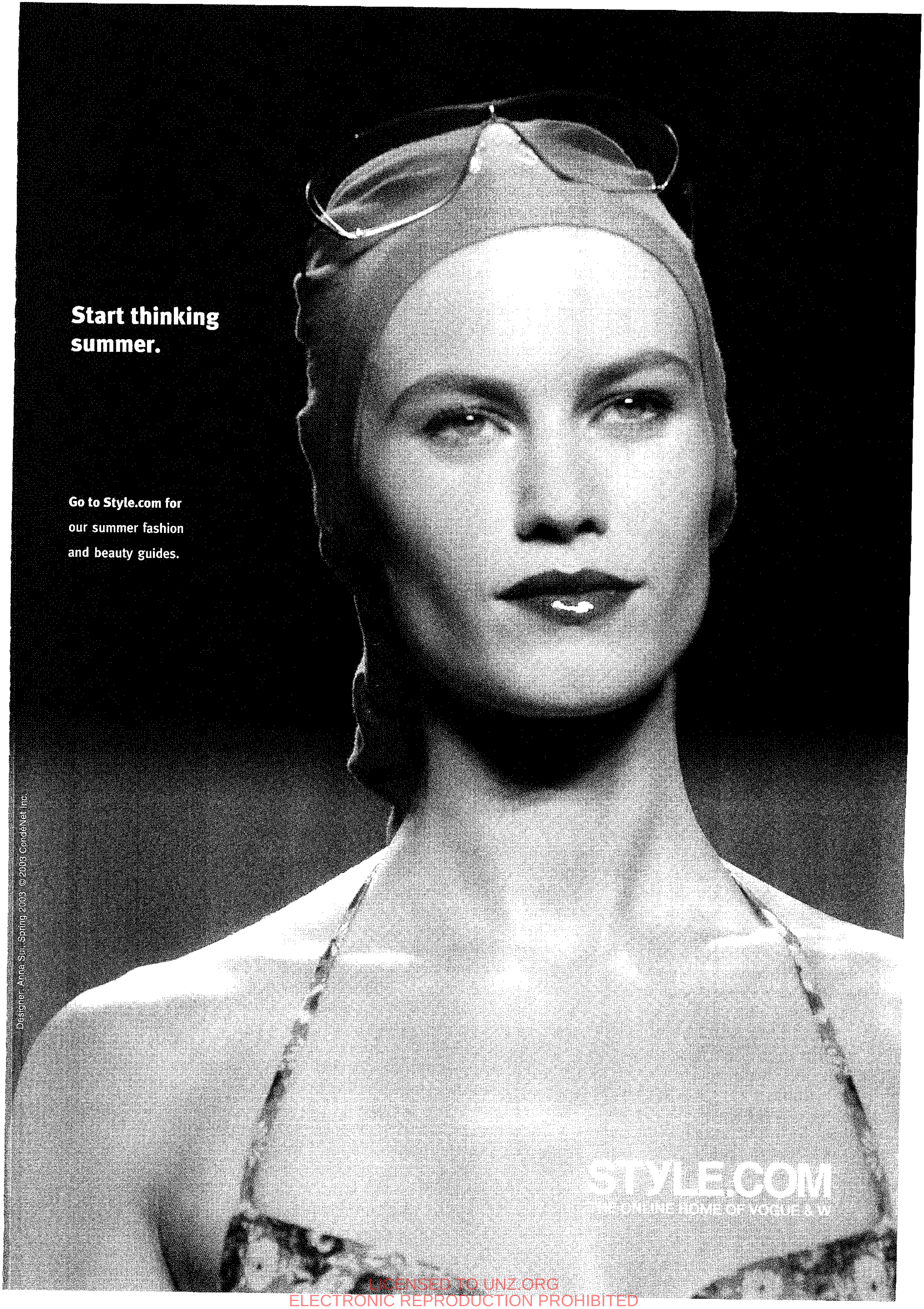


Robert Cort

Might not writing such a frank book punch Cort's own self-destruct button?

Cort looked anxious for a moment, then drained a cup of cappuccino with an air of calm. "No, no," he said. "I'm about to close a new deal with Paramount."

—*Tad Friend*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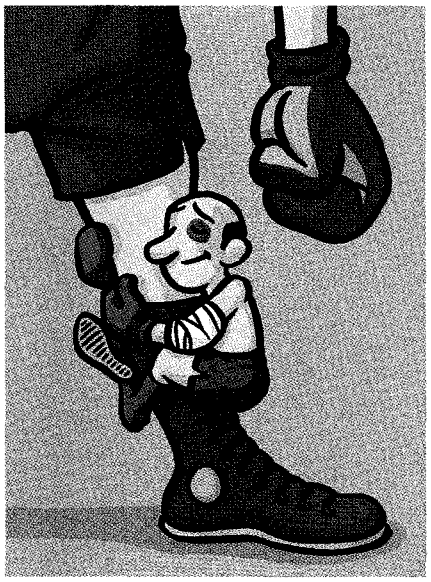
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
IN WALL STREET WE TRUST

Last year, Merrill Lynch was accused of defrauding its clients by giving them corrupt advice about which stocks to buy. Internal e-mails demonstrated that its research analysts had publicly recommended stocks that they'd privately derided. The company wound up having to make a payment of a hundred million dollars, as part of a settlement with the New York Attorney General's office. And how did Merrill's retail clients react to all this? They gave the company eighteen billion more dollars to manage. It was a tough year for Citigroup, too, what with the revelations about chicanery at its Salomon Smith Barney division, whose customers lost vast sums of money on tainted stock tips from the likes of Jack Grubman. So what did the customers do? They gave Citigroup another thirty-five billion dollars to manage.

If Circuit City sold televisions that blew up after three months, people would probably stop shopping there. Why is Wall Street different? For one thing, Wall Street is selling a service, not a product, and customers demonstrate much greater loyalty to services than to products, because services usually involve personal relationships. An investor who has his money with Merrill Lynch forms a bond with his broker, not the firm. Just as voters will say both that Congress should be turned out on its ear and that their own congressmen should be reëlected, investors can simultaneously belittle Wall Street and maintain that their brokers are really good guys. In a way, the Street is benefitting, perversely, from the bursting of the stock-market bubble; shell-shocked investors are inclined to entrust their money to professionals, even if those same professionals had as much responsibility as anyone else for the mess.

Then, there's what's known as "the status-quo bias." Most people are cautious about their money and are reluctant to make changes—even sensible ones. A survey of Vanguard investors, for instance, found that in 2001 only fourteen per cent of them made any change in their investment choices. And a study the same year by the economists Brigitte Madrian and Dennis Shea found that the rate of participation in a 401(k) plan was determined, in large part, by whether people were enrolled automatically or had to choose to sign up. Apparently, when it comes to money, inertia rules.

Such conservatism is understandable, but its consequences are grave. Yes, the recent $1.4-billion settlement between Wall Street and state and federal regulators will make it harder for the world's Jack Grubmans to prosper (and to go on golf outings, as a Lehman Brothers analyst discovered last week, when he was barred from an investment-banking trip to Scotland). But the troubling conflicts of interest remain in place. And only if firms feel that those conflicts are costing them customers and profits will that change.



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

The overriding conflict is that most major firms—including Merrill Lynch, Citigroup, Morgan Stanley, and UBS—run both investment banks and brokerages. Investment bankers help companies sell stocks and bonds. Brokers help investors buy stocks and bonds. Companies want to sell high, investors want to buy low. Companies want Wall Street to make them look good, investors want Wall Street to tell them which companies actually are good. When the same firm is advising both sides, someone is going to get a raw deal, even if everyone is acting honestly.

There's nothing new about this. The investment-bank/brokerage combination was pioneered, in the twenties, by a man named Charles Mitchell, a jaunty, gladhanding huckster who turned his business, the National City Company, into a powerful machine for selling securities. As John Brooks described him in his book "Once in Golconda," "He pressed his men to move the merchandise as relentlessly as if it were shoes or hair oil." Much of that merchandise was stocks and bonds—often for South American countries with shaky finances, like Peru and Brazil—that National City would underwrite, then recommend to its customers. National City made money at both ends: a hefty underwriting fee, and then hefty sales commissions (and a sizable markup). Mitchell called it "manufacturing" securities.

"Peruvian bonds" may have given way to "Internet stocks," but the business of underwriting and marketing hasn't much changed. Wall Street firms are still manufacturing. There's nothing wrong with selling stuff or with looking out for your own best interests; after all, the whole point of a free market is to make the pursuit of self-interest economically efficient. But the free market works best when both parties to a deal know the score, and not when investors think that brokers and analysts are objective sages, instead of just gussied-up salesmen.

After a year and a half of scandal, investors have run out of excuses. The Street continues to get away with giving biased advice because customers have not punished it for doing so, even though there are plenty of alternatives (index funds, discount brokerages, and so on). Managing investors' money is more important to Merrill Lynch than investment banking, and Citigroup relies more on its reputation with consumers than on its ability to underwrite stocks and bonds. Still, neither company will change—say, by cutting its investment bank loose—until it is given a bottom-line incentive to do so. The economist Albert O. Hirschman famously observed that consumers have two ways of registering their discontent: "voice" and "exit." Since the bubble burst, investors, loyal to a fault, have agitated for change mainly by airing their grievances. But voice is a currency that is not widely accepted on the Street. So perhaps the time has come for investors to shut up and take their money somewhere else. Exit, pursued by a bear.

—*James Surowiecki*

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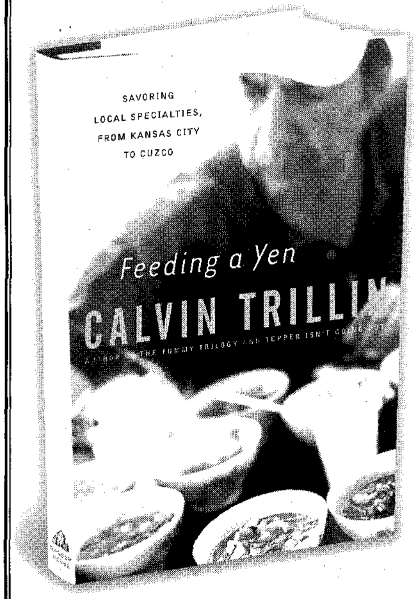

Twenty years after the final volume of The Tummy Trilogy, Calvin Trillin returns to the table—and to the counter, and to the take-out window, and to the market stall.

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ANNALS OF LAW

ADVICE AND DISSENT

The fight over the President's judicial nominations.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

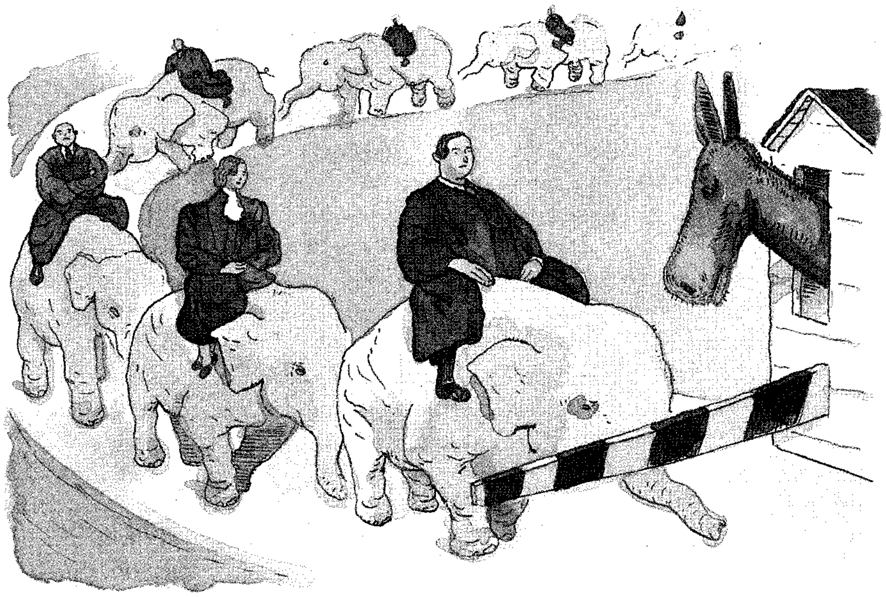
Ever since the Republicans took control of the Senate in January, Orrin Hatch, the new chairman of the Judiciary Committee, has sought to use his party's one-vote advantage on the nineteen-member panel to speed President Bush's judicial nominations toward confirmation. On April 10th, Hatch called for a vote on a nominee for a district-court judgeship in Arkansas. A quorum of ten is needed to call a vote, but, with all the demands on senators' schedules, it's difficult to keep that many together for long. The Utah Republican tried to seize the moment as soon as the required complement of his colleagues had wandered into the hearing room in the Dirksen Building. "The clerk will call the roll on J. Leon Holmes," Hatch said, but then he noticed Dianne Feinstein, the California Democrat, seeking to be recognized. Hatch, who is known for his courtesy to colleagues, halted the vote and allowed the Senator to speak. He had walked into an ambush.

Senate Democrats have displayed an uncharacteristic combativeness toward President Bush's nominations to the federal bench. They have even launched filibusters to prevent votes on two appeals-court nominees, Priscilla Owen and Miguel Estrada. The hearing on Leon Holmes showed that the Democrats were willing to fight on lower-profile nominees, too. Feinstein said, "Let me begin, Mr. Chairman, by saying that I have never voted against a district judge, and, in reading this record and listening to the comments that this man has made, I do not see how anyone can divine from these comments that he has either the temperament or wisdom to be a judge." In most respects, Holmes was typical of Bush's choices for the federal bench—white, middle-aged (fifty-two years old), and very conservative. He had been a leader in the right-to-life movement in Arkansas, and had written and spoken out frequently against abortion, often in Catholic publications.

Feinstein went on, "In 1980, he wrote a letter to the editor stating that abortion should not be available to rape victims because conceptions from rape occur with the same frequency as snow in Miami." In one article, Holmes had said, "The wife is to subordinate herself to her husband." In another, he wrote, "The pro-abortionists counsel us to respond to these problems by abandoning what little morality our society still recognizes. This was attempted by one highly sophisticated, historically Christian nation in our century, Nazi Germany." Charles Schumer, the New York Democrat, went next: "We checked the almanac. It snowed in Miami once in the last hundred years. Thirty-two thousand women became pregnant last year because of rape." Schumer recounted more of Holmes's record, saying, finally, "This guy is so far off the deep end that can't we call a halt to this at some point?"

Plainly startled, Hatch responded, "I have to admit I am concerned about some of those comments," but then he noted that in Arkansas some Democrats as well as Republicans had endorsed Holmes's nomination. Still, the attack by Feinstein and Schumer unnerved Arlen Specter, a pro-choice Republican on the Judiciary Committee. "I had been advised by staff that the five nominees"—scheduled for votes that day—"were all noncontroversial," Specter said. In light of what he had heard about Holmes, however, Specter said that the committee should delay the vote to study his record. Hatch suggested instead that the committee vote to send the nomination to the Senate floor with no recommendation—a neutral finding that would at least keep Holmes's hopes for confirmation alive. But, after two more Democrats—Patrick Leahy, of Vermont, and Richard Durbin, of Illinois—added their own condemnations, the chairman had to admit defeat. There would be no vote that day, and Holmes's future as a nominee was in jeopardy.

Even more than Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush campaigned for the Presidency promising an ideological transformation of the federal judiciary, which includes six hundred and sixty-five district judges, a hundred and seventy-nine appellate judges, and nine Supreme Court Justices, all with lifetime appointments. Bush has cited Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas as the Supreme Court Justices he most admired. Last year, he told an audience, "We've got to get good, conservative judges appointed to the bench and approved by the United States Senate." That statement has been born out by his nominations, especially to the circuit courts of appeals. So far, Bush has nominated two hundred federal judges; more than half of them have been confirmed, as will most of the rest. But the Democrats, even with their diminished status in the Senate, have managed to stop several of the President's most controversial nominations. That struggle presages the even more significant battles that will take place if, as expected, one or more Supreme Court Justices retire in the next year or so. In part, the Democrats' effort has been fuelled by the personal dynamics of the Senate, where an aggrieved minority can accomplish, or at least thwart, a great deal of legislative activity. But the confirmation disputes trace their roots to the Constitution itself, and to the shifting meanings of the senators' obligation to advise and consent to the President's choices of judges. Also, to be sure, the fight over the Bush judges reflects the legal battle—two generations old and counting—over abortion.



Bush is seeking to take the judiciary farther right than even Ronald Reagan did.

BARRY BLITT

Nominations for lower courts stir little public interest, despite their manifest importance. Mark Mellman, a Democratic pollster, says, "We have never seen an issue that people are less concerned about than nominations to the federal bench." But, he adds, "the core activists on both sides do care very deeply." So do the senators. Dianne Feinstein told me, "In the Senate, what goes around comes around. During the Clinton years, especially after 1994, when the Gingrich crowd took over in the House, our Judiciary Committee really changed, too, especially at the freshman end. Many of Clinton's nominees went years without getting their hearings. That left a very bad taste in our mouths." In 1999, Hatch, as chairman of the Judiciary Committee, refused to hold any hearings for six months, in a bid to get an ally nominated to a judgeship in Utah. (He got his judge.) Clinton nominated people for two vacancies on the District of Columbia Circuit, including the one Estrada sought to fill, but Republicans never allowed the nominations to be brought up for a vote. And, even though Clinton generally picked moderate nominees, after 1995 Republicans in the Senate blocked about a third of them.

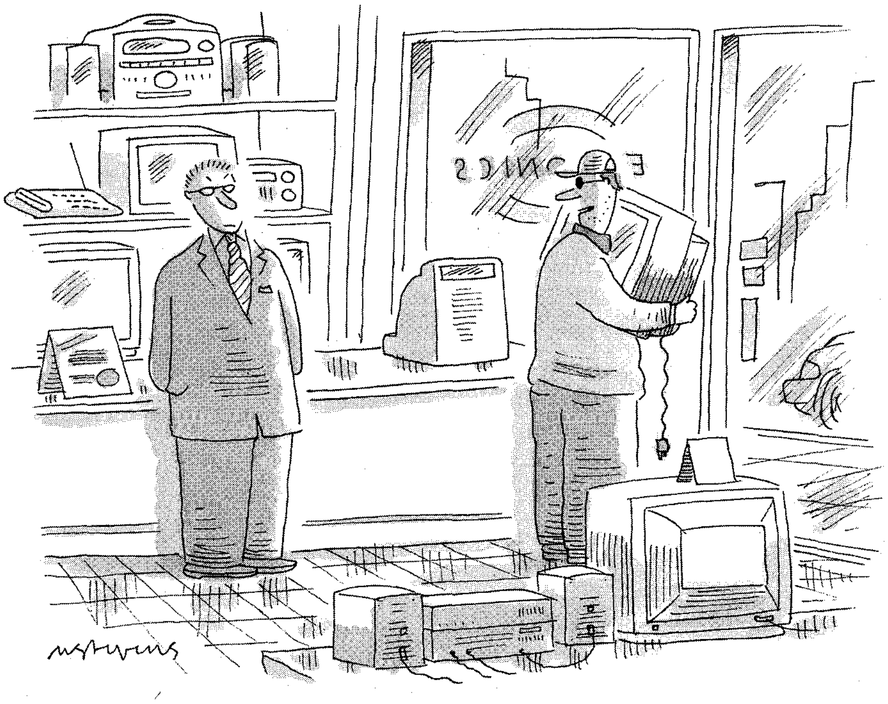
Owing to the lack of public interest, a sort of secret society of confirmation junkies carefully follows developments. The opposing groups have almost identical names, which challenge outsiders to break the code. In the universe of the Alliance for Justice (liberal), the Committee for Justice (conservative), and the Institute for Justice (libertarian), September 9, 2001, marked an important date in the Bush Presidency. That was the day Miguel Estrada was nominated to serve as a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, which is generally regarded as the second most important court in the nation, after the Supreme Court. At the age of thirty-nine, Estrada had impeccable legal credentials and an inspiring personal story. He had emigrated to New York from Honduras as a teenager, attended Columbia College and Harvard Law School, clerked at the Supreme Court (for Anthony Kennedy), and served as a federal prosecutor and assistant solicitor general. Given the Bush Administration's long-standing efforts to appeal to Hispanic voters, Estrada looked like a prime candidate to become a Supreme Court Justice. (Three former D.C. Circuit judges—Scalia, Thomas, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg—serve on the Supreme Court.)

But, for all his accomplishments, Estrada had virtually no paper trail. "Unlike many nominees, he has never written anything, he has never given speeches, plus he was very vague in his answers to the committee," Feinstein told me. "He's a cipher." Estrada did, however, belong to the Federalist Society, an organization of conservative lawyers that has served as an essential networking tool on the right, and in the Washington legal community activists on the left and the right spread word that Estrada was a hard-core conservative in the tradition of Scalia and Thomas. So liberal groups, including several Latino organizations, mobilized against Estrada and began examining his past for ethical missteps that might be used to stop his confirmation. When Estrada was nominated to the D.C. Circuit, Democrats still controlled the Senate, and Patrick Leahy, then the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, showed no hurry to move the nomination along.

The search for dirt came up empty. But Senator Schumer was building the framework for a more potent attack on the nominee—and, indeed, on the Bush effort to reshape the judiciary. “When I came to the Senate, I knew I had the ability to help choose judges,” Schumer told me recently over lunch in the Senate dining room. “And I chose three standards for myself—excellence, moderation, and diversity. I don't think the third branch of government should be all white males. Then Bush took over, and it became clear right from the start that he was changing the ways judges are nominated, by picking people who are almost all far to the right. On a scale of one to ten, with ten the most liberal, Clinton chose a lot of sixes and sevens—lots of partners in law firms and former prosecutors. Bush said during the campaign that he was going to pick judges in the mold of Scalia and Thomas, but I thought it was just campaign talk. Then it became clear that that was exactly what he meant.”

Politics had also had an effect on the way the Senate confirmed nominees. In 1987, the Senate defeated President Reagan's nomination of Robert H. Bork to the Supreme Court after a rancorous debate over his ideology, especially his views on race and abortion. After Bork, and partly in reaction to that battle, fights over judicial confirmations tended to focus on the nominees' personal ethics rather than on their views on the issues that might come before them. Over a period of almost a year, starting in June of 2001, Schumer held a series of judiciary-subcommittee hearings in which he proposed to bring back Bork-style debate. For too long, he wrote in an Op-Ed piece in the *Times*, explicit consideration of nominees' ideology was taboo in the Senate. This forced senators “to justify their opposition by finding nonideological factors, like small financial improprieties from long ago. This ‘gotcha’ politics has warped the confirmation process and harmed the Senate's reputation.” Instead, Schumer said, the Senate should feel free to reject nominees—who were otherwise well qualified—because their views were simply too conservative.

In Schumer's hearings, Republicans, as well as some legal-establishment groups, argued that judicial nominees should be evaluated more on competence and qualifications than on ideology. Jeff Sessions, the Alabama senator who was the ranking Republican on the panel, told me, “It's absolutely critical that judges be able to divorce their personal views from their legal rulings. That has been a cornerstone of Anglo-American law—the dispassionate judge.” On the other side, Richard Durbin told me, “Many of the Republicans up here are trying to kid us and the public and say what judges do is all automatic, all they do is apply the law. There's a lot more to it than that—and I think we won the argument about that.” When the Judiciary Committee, still under Democratic control, rejected Bush's nominations of Priscilla Owen and Charles Pickering to appeals-court judgeships, in 2002, the grounds were explicitly ideological, based mostly on Owen's views on abortion and Pickering's on race. This year's battles, too, have been over the substantive views of Bush's nominees.



“No, thanks, I'm just looting.”

In February, Cass R. Sunstein, a professor at the University of Chicago law school, was invited to speak at a meeting of Senate Democrats. A prolific scholar, Sunstein is known as a moderate. At the meeting, he recalled, “I said there was something different about the new kind of conservative judges that some conservatives are favoring. It used to be that conservatives believed in judicial restraint—that courts should back off and let the democratic process work. Those people were targeting Earl Warren and decisions like Miranda and Roe v. Wade. But the movement conservatives—some of the new right-wing activists—are different. They're against Roe, too, but they're also against Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. They want to restore the status quo ante from about 1934. They want to cut back on what government is allowed to do—whether it's campaign-finance legislation, or affirmative action, or the right to sue for environmental violations. This Supreme Court has struck down more federal legislation at a higher annual rate than any other in the last half century. The new people want to strike down more. It's a radical agenda.”

Sunstein previewed for the senators some of the research for his book “Why Societies Need Dissent,” which will be published this summer. “We looked at thousands of opinions,” he said, “and we saw that Republican nominees really are different from Democratic nominees. And when you get three Republican nominees sitting together”—circuit-court judges generally sit in panels of three—“they get really conservative. We had a large enough sample, so that we could see proof of this in affirmative action, campaign finance, the Americans with Disabilities Act, judicial review of environmental regulations, and sex discrimination."

But once the senators stepped into the ideological thicket they did not settle the question of how conservative is too conservative. "If you take what the Democrats say at face value, they do not want to confirm Republican nominees whom they see as too conservative," Jon Kyl, a Republican senator from Arizona, told me. "The test that they are applying is basically a Chuck Schumer test. I don't think that Chuck, being from New York, is the best person to define what mainstream America is. I'm not sure I am, either. I think the President, since he is elected nationally, is the best representative."

The battle between the President and the Senate over judicial confirmations is nothing new. In 1787, during most of the debate over the Constitution, the matter of the appointment of judges was a settled issue. In all the early drafts, the power belonged either to the Senate or to a combination of the Senate and the House. "Appointment by the Executive is a dangerous prerogative," George Mason, of Virginia, wrote. "It might even give him an influence over the Judiciary Department itself." At the last moment, though, the Framers compromised on judicial nominations, splitting the power between the President and the Senate. The final version of Article II, which defined the powers of the judiciary, stated that the President "shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint" members of the federal judiciary.

Both parts of the Senate's obligation—advice and consent—had real meaning in the early days of the nation. "Look at John Rutledge, nominated to the Supreme Court by George Washington," Schumer said. "The Senate considered his views on all sorts of things, and the reason they voted against him was his view on the Jay treaty"—which mended relations with England after the Revolution. "Ideology has always been a reason to vote against nominees." Many early Supreme Court nominations turned into political brawls. John Tyler got only one confirmation out of six nominations; Congress so reviled Andrew Johnson that it not only turned down his sole appointment to the Supreme Court but also passed a law that reduced the size of the court to seven Justices. (The two Justices were restored under Ulysses S. Grant.)

But Schumer's interpretation omits some history. For much of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, Presidents had little interference from the Senate on judicial appointments, particularly with lower-court appointments. Most nominees never even testified before Congress, much less discussed their substantive views on the law. Boyden Gray, who served as counsel to the first President Bush and founded the Committee for Justice, in order to help George W. Bush get his nominations through the Senate, says, "Lincoln had it right. When it came to a nominee to the Court, he said, 'We cannot ask what he will do, and if we should, and he would answer us, we should despise him for it.' Nominees simply shouldn't be asked what their views are of specific issues. That threatens the whole idea of judicial independence." Indeed, Gray remembered when Democrats were making precisely that argument, during the first Bush Administration. "In early 1989, we were asked to meet with Senators Biden, Kennedy, Thurmond, and Hatch, and they were all unanimous about this. They said, 'If we catch you asking nominees what their views are about Roe v. Wade or anything else, we won't even give them a hearing.' The Democrats said they didn't want any litmus tests for our judges." Senator Kyl notes that Democrats seem to have flipped their position. "The issue always comes back to abortion," Kyl says. "The Judiciary Committee always asks nominees in our questionnaire, 'Has anyone ever asked you about your position on any issue?' The idea was to try to prevent a litmus test on abortion from Republican Presidents. The Democrats thought that kind of thing was inappropriate. Now they're saying not only is it appropriate but it should be the standard."

In truth, then, the nature of congressional deliberations has always had less to do with constitutional history than with raw politics. And, in the current environment, Democrats believe that the abortion issue plays in their favor. John Kerry, the Massachusetts Democrat, has even made it part of his Presi-

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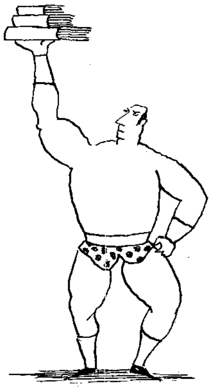
dential campaign. After a recent speech in Iowa, Kerry told a reporter that he would appoint only judges who supported Roe v. Wade. “If some people want to call it a test, they can call it a test,” he said. Later, Kerry told me, “I would only appoint judges who understand the Bill of Rights and who wouldn’t reinterpret settled law. Roe is settled law. I don’t think overturning Roe is a close kind of case. I’m not willing to go back on it.”

Republicans will fight just as hard. “I have no doubt that the Democrats are making it a litmus-test issue, and they are going to be very hard-pressed to vote for someone who is pro-life,” Senator Hatch told me. “You could say the legal issue around abortion was decided if ninety-five per cent of the people agreed with Roe, but it’s a cloudy issue at best. The Democrats are fond of saying this is settled law. It’s been in existence since 1973. That doesn’t mean it’s right. The Democrats are trying to make sure that every nominee says it’s the finest, best decision in the history of the Court. And that’s total bullcorn.”

When Miguel Estrada finally testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, on September 26, 2002, Senator Feinstein got quickly to the point. “There is a substantial majority of opinion, I believe, that surrounds a woman’s right to choose, and surrounds the right to privacy,” she said. “I’d like to ask your view with respect to a fundamental case, and that’s the 1973 case of Roe v. Wade, when the Supreme Court held that the Constitution’s right to privacy encompassed a woman’s right to choose to have an abortion, and the government regulations that burdened her exercise of that right were subject to judicial scrutiny. Do you believe that the Constitution encompasses a right to privacy?”



Estrada replied, “The Supreme Court has so held and I have no view of any nature whatsoever, whether it be legal, philosophical, moral, or any other type of view that would keep me from applying that case law faithfully.”

“Do you believe that Roe was correctly decided?” the Senator followed up.

“My view of the judicial function, Senator Feinstein, does not allow me to answer that question,” Estrada said. “I have a personal view on the subject of abortion, as I think you know. But I have not done what I think the judicial function would require me to do in order to ascertain whether the court got it right as an original matter. I haven’t listened to parties. . . . I have had no particular reason to go back and look at whether it was right or wrong as a matter of law, as I would if I were a judge that was hearing the case for the first time. It is there.”

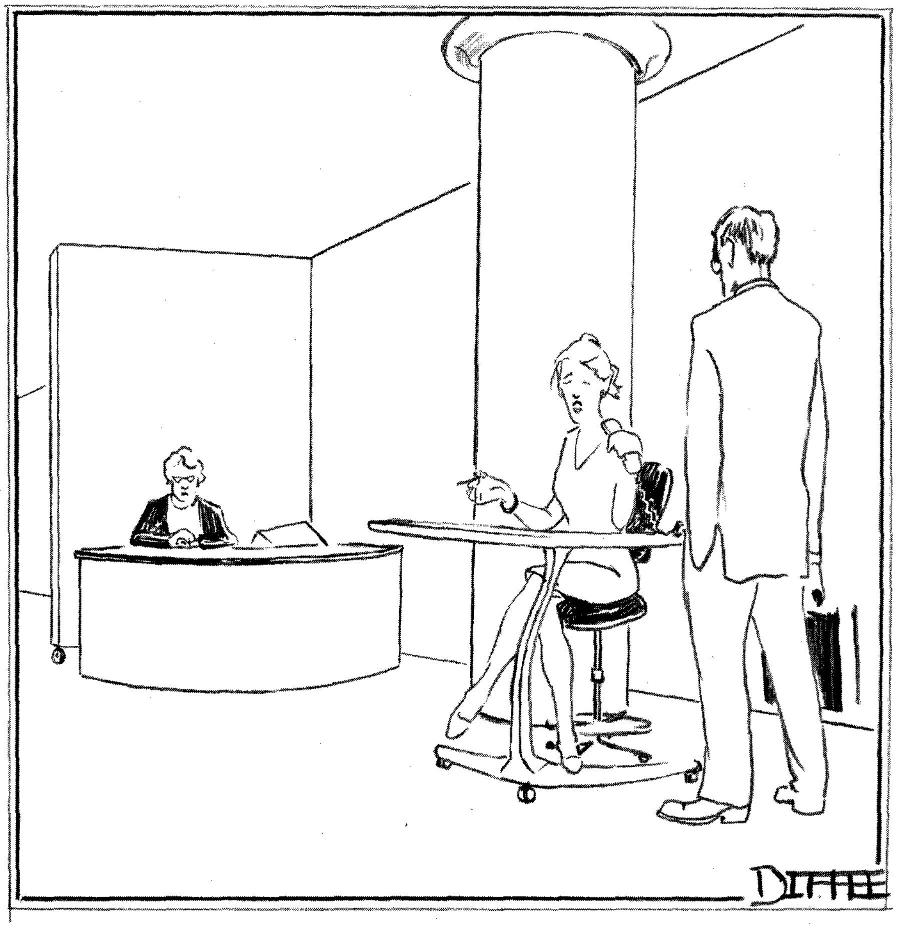
Other Bush nominees had given similarly vague answers about Roe, but, when the Estrada nomination headed to the Senate floor, in early 2003, the Democrats decided not to let him get away with it. Poll results about abortion rights vary depending on how questions are phrased, but the Democrats do have most of the public on their side. “Somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of the public believe that Roe v. Wade should not be overturned,” the pollster Mark Mellman says. Dianne Feinstein told me, “In the Senate, since 1994, we have been losing virtually every battle having to do with women controlling their own reproductive systems. There is a sense that Roe may be in trouble, so obviously those of us who are pro-choice want to protect this and make sure that Roe is fairly dealt with. In the new conservative movement, we know very well that they would like to have judges end abortion in this country, and this creates a major issue for those of us who are pro-choice.” Estrada’s evasiveness—and his lack of previously expressed views—left Democrats with a choice: they could let him proceed and hope for the best, or pick a fight with the Administration about him. They decided to fight.

In an effort to learn more about Estrada’s views, Leahy and his fellow-Democrats asked the Administration to produce memos that Estrada had written when he worked in the solicitor general’s office. “Estrada’s views on Roe are very unclear to me,” Senator Durbin said. “He doesn’t have a treasure trove of legal writings to turn to, he doesn’t have any legal opinions that he’s rendered as a judge. Virtually the only record of his thinking is contained in those memoranda." In the Bush White House, judicial confirmations are nominally under the control of the counsel, Alberto Gonzalez. (His main deputy on the subject is Brett Kavanaugh, a Federalist Society member who is best known in Washington as having been a prosecutor in Kenneth Starr's Whitewater investigation and a principal author of the Starr report.) Historically, senators have been allowed to review some memorandums by judicial nominees. But, in a letter, Gonzalez told the Democrats that the Administration would not produce the memos, because to do so would chill free expression among Administration lawyers and violate the principle of executive privilege, which protects the internal deliberations of the President's aides.

The Democrats, denied access to Estrada's memos, did the only thing a minority party can do to stop a vote: launch a filibuster. Through repeated test votes on the filibuster, more than forty of the forty-eight Democrats (plus James Jeffords, the Vermont independent) voted to stop Estrada's confirmation. The Republicans needed sixty votes to break the filibuster. "We sort of all reached the conclusion that if we rewarded stonewalling we're just going to have more stonewalling," Leahy told me. "It wasn't going to get easier, it was going to get more difficult."

For the cautious Democrats, the filibuster marked a dramatic change from senatorial tradition. As Jeff Sessions, the Alabama Republican, pointed out, "The Constitution, fairly read, clearly calls for a majority vote on judicial nominees. We do a lot of things around here to make each other mad, but we've never in history had a filibuster on a lower-court nominee. So we've essentially made it a sixty-vote requirement for confirmation. If this stands up, you will see it used by the other side, too."

Still, the success against Estrada emboldened the Democrats to launch more filibusters. Several senators from both parties asserted that the Democrats' leader in the Senate, Tom Daschle, had said he could hold a filibuster against any judicial nominee who drew unanimous opposition from all nine Democrats on the Judiciary Committee. On May 1st, the Democrats launched a filibuster to stop the nomination of Priscilla Owen, the Texas judge who had been rejected by Leahy's committee in 2002 but was recently approved by Hatch's. "We've learned we can win these fights," Schumer says. Hatch's committee ultimately sent the nomination of J. Leon Holmes, the Arkansas anti-abortion activist, to the Senate floor without a recommendation. If he comes up for a vote, his nomination also may be filibustered. In response to the Democrats' efforts against Estrada and Owen, Republicans have proposed a revision of the Senate's rules to make it more difficult to sustain filibusters against judicial nominees. But the inherent conservatism of the Senate as an institution makes the rules change a long shot at best.

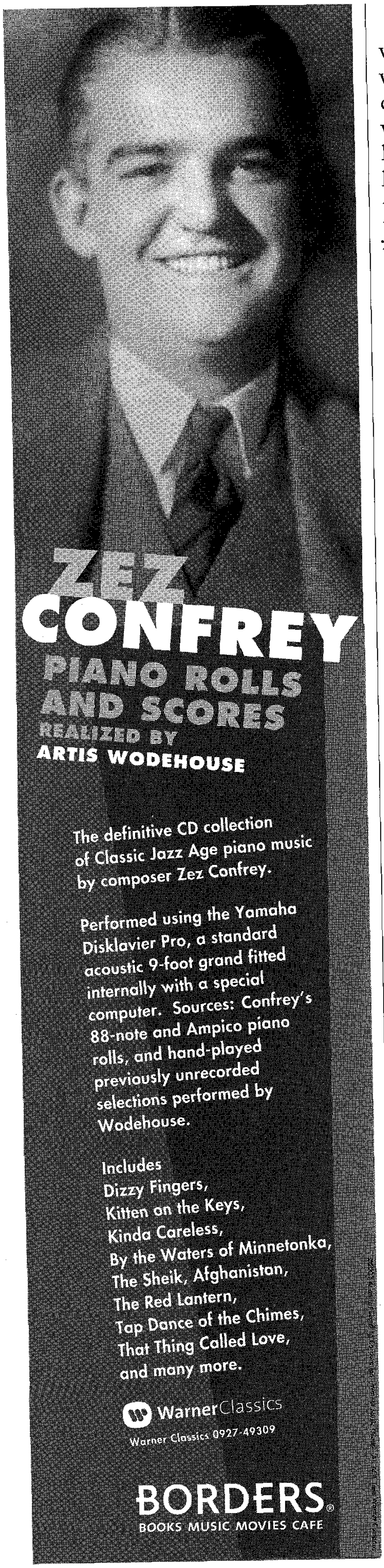


"The receptionist will see you now."

• •

Stephen Breyer, the newest Supreme Court Justice, was confirmed almost a decade ago, creating the longest gap between nominations in more than a hundred and fifty years. Partisans on both sides acknowledge that the clashes about Estrada and the other lower-court nominees amount to little more than skirmishes before the real battle, over the future of the high court. As Senator Kyl puts it, "What they are doing is sending a message about a Supreme Court nomination—that it will be a long and painful process unless the candidate is someone to the liking of the Democrats on the Judiciary Committee."

But, for all the agitation among Democrats about a possible Supreme Court appointment, there is equally strong pressure from the President's core supporters on the right. The first President Bush's appointment of David Souter to the Supreme Court, in 1990, remains an open wound for many conservatives. John Sununu, then the White House chief of staff, had assured conservatives that the obscure New Hampshire judge deserved their support, but Souter turned out to be a moderate-to-liberal Justice and a key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vote in support of Roe v. Wade. "I would hope that, based on the President's judicial nominations so far, you will see him appoint Justices more in line with a conservative judicial philosophy," Jay Sekulow, the chief counsel to the American Center for Law and Justice, an advocacy group founded by the Reverend Pat Robertson, says. "With Souter's nomination, there was a 'Don't worry, everything will be fine' approach. I don't think we in the conservative movement will accept that approach again, and I don't think the White House will try it. They know the Supreme Court is their lasting legacy."

Democrats have their own lingering resentments of a Supreme Court nomination fight—the one over Clarence Thomas, in 1991. In the popular imagination, that struggle was defined by the dramatic face-off between Thomas and his former colleague Anita Hill, but Senate Democrats still fume about an earlier part of those hearings—when the nominee refused to reveal his views on many legal and constitutional controversies, among them Roe v. Wade. (On the Court, Thomas has been a consistent vote against Roe.) "I think everyone remembers that Thomas said, in an answer to one of my questions, that he had never discussed the Roe decision," Patrick Leahy recalled. "I don't think those kinds of answers will ever be accepted again. We have evolved since generations ago, when the Senate asked no questions. We will never go back to that day." Many of Bush's nominees, like Estrada, avoid questions about Roe and other controversial opinions, by saying that, as lower-court judges, they are bound to follow the Supreme Court. But Justices can overturn their own precedents, making their views on the Court's cases highly relevant. "It will be easier to defeat a right-wing Supreme Court nomination than a right-wing lower-court nomination," Ralph Neas, the president of People for the American Way, the liberal advocacy group, said. "When Supreme Court nominees answer the questions about where they stand, they won't be able to hide behind the Court's own precedents."

It is not clear whether Bush will find any Supreme Court nominee who is conservative enough to be approved by the right but moderate enough to be confirmed by the Senate. Gonzalez, the White House counsel, who is a former justice of the Texas Supreme Court, is often described as a possibility, and the Bush family's fondness for loyal insiders, as well as for political outreach to Hispanics, suggests that he may be a favorite. But the right has concerns about him, mostly because he wrote an opinion in the Texas court that could be interpreted as pro-choice. In that case, the court approved a process allowing minors to obtain abortions by getting the permission of a judge instead of a parent. (Priscilla Owen dissented from this decision.) Around the Federalist Society, it is said, the joke goes that "Alberto Gonzalez is Spanish for David Souter," a witticism that can't help his chances. Conversely, of course, Gonzalez's supposed moderation might help him avoid a Democratic filibuster and win confirmation.

Some things about Supreme Court nominations can safely be predicted. Democrats are bound to take a harder line on a replacement for a pro-choice Justice—say, John Paul Stevens, who is eighty-three years old—than for Scalia, Thomas, or William Rehnquist. The Court's current lineup stands at six to three to preserve Roe, but if the balance were to slip to five to four the next nomination might be even more contentious. Other factors—among them the personality of the nominee, the popularity of his or her key Senate sponsors, the over-all state of the Bush Administration—also will play an important part. The judicial battles of the last year suggest that Senate Democrats will show real grit in fighting to preserve the right to choose.

Still, Supreme Court vacancies tend to come in bunches, and this aging Court may give Bush several chances to leave his imprint. "The Democrats may think they have a winning issue with abortion," Orrin Hatch said, "but the fact is, they can't stop every nomination." Grant, William Henry Harrison, and Harry Truman each got four appointments in four years; Nixon got four in thirty months. F.D.R. got to appoint all nine Justices in less than six years—the number of years that George W. Bush may remain in office. ♦

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AND: A calendar of *New Yorker*
events across the country

SHOUTS & MURMURS

PERSONALS

BY BRUCE McCALL

Lonely ex-barfly in severe withdrawal needs to mooch smokes, preferably off ex-bartender. You bring the bar nuts, cocktail napkins, and swizzle sticks, I'll tell the dirty jokes until the coffin nails run out or I fall off the stool.

Lady deep inhaler, haggard, jumpy, no appetite, yearns to be totally hooked on a tobacco baron who's into monogrammed silver cigarette cases and gold Dunhill butane lighters. Let's share the joy of flying off on your personal Gulfstream jet to some paradise where the government runs the tobacco business, smoking our brains out all the way and setting off the lavatory alarm at will.

Former Le Cirque, Le Bernardin, Lespinasse denizen seeks fellow Havana fancier to share takeout, talk Cohibas, Montecristos, the Cuba embargo. Your stoop or mine? I'll bring the clipper.

Happy-go-Luckies four-pack-a-day midtown accountant would love to meet a hoarse-voiced living chimney for doorway breaks, after-hours puffs on rooftops, under bridges, what have you. Gender not important, but no menthols, please!

You hate power-mad do-gooder bluenose New York City pressure groups but love sore throats, smoldering ashtrays, taking cabs at 3 A.M. to that all-nite Haitian deli in Brooklyn to pick up a fresh carton or two. Translated: you're a serious Gauloises freak like me. Let's meet for a pre-breakfast smoke or after-dinner coughing fit in the back seat of my Citroën Deux Chevaux. (Gitanes phonies need not apply.)

I know you! You're the hollow-eyed gal with the yellow fingers sitting on the curb outside Elaine's late last Thursday nite chain-smoking Balkan Sobranies. I'm the wheezing guy with the shakes—ring a bell?—who begged you for a puff. Something tells me we could make beautiful smoke rings together!

Virginia Slims-addicted Mafia Madonna who likes gasping for air and smoking in convent bathrooms seeks Marlboro Hit Man for nicotine reveries. Where is that special goomba who'll meet me at a certain South Jersey truck stop to share untaxed Camels in the back of a big rig just in from North Carolina? (Shoo, you A.T.F. agents! I can spot you a mile away!)

I'm a gal who's twenty-five but looks fifty, lights up her next one off her last one, and just swore off restaurants to brown-bag it in alleyways where men aren't too proud to scramble for butts. Are you man enough to join me?

My one-pack-a-day health-nut mate just left me and now I'm looking for that certain leather-lunged, unfiltered some-one hours away from emphysema who's sincere about stinking up my car, my apartment, my clothes, my life. Come share my collection of Big Tobacco press releases and much, much more.

You love the look of a cigarette stubbed out on a plate of fried eggs and would just as soon punch out the maître d' as put out that post-appetizer Pall Mall. In brief, you're persona non grata in every eatery from Staten Island to Yonkers. If you think a mouthful of corned-beef hash goes best with a lungful of Camels, let's pollute the air of your or my kitchen dinette together.

Roll-your-own contrarian, stooped, brown teeth, dog breath, dreams about a certain wrinkle-pussed soul mate he glimpsed being bounced from Balthazar last Sunday night with a Marlboro Light in one hand and a Schimmelpennick in the other. Have been burning holes in my pajamas every night thinking of you—we could make smokes and sing old cigarette jingles together. ♦

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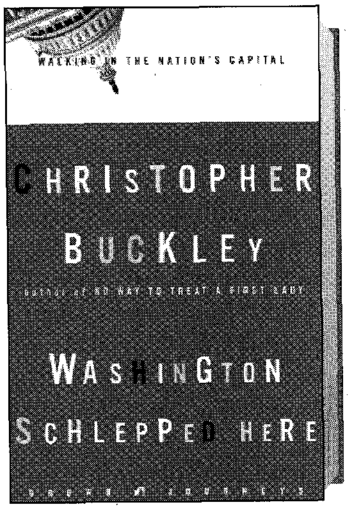
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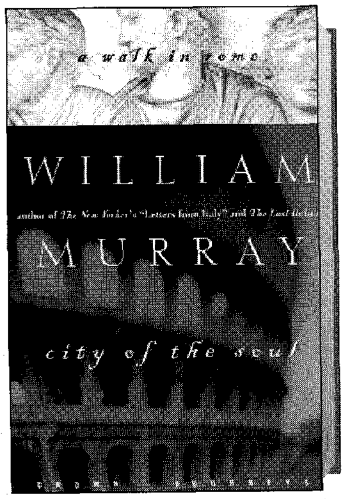

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LETTER FROM INDIA

THE STRONGMAN

Where is Hindu-nationalist violence leading?

BY LARISSA MacFARQUHAR

On the morning of his son Uddhav's forty-second birthday, Bal Thackeray retreated upstairs to his private living room, in order to avoid the crowds. From his window, he could see hundreds of his supporters outside in the street, standing in long lines waiting to get in—they had come from all over Bombay to his house, in a suburb near the airport, to pay their respects. His street was always guarded, but that day there were more policemen than usual. Earlier that morning, the servants had strewn petals over the floors of the downstairs rooms and hung floral garlands on the walls. Now dozens of people were crowded into the front hallway, gossiping and sweating and carrying unwieldy plastic-wrapped flower arrangements as gifts, as though there weren't already enough flowers in the house. In the reception room, Uddhav was standing, a little hunched over in his mild way, as well-wishers filed past him, touching their foreheads to his hands or kneeling to kiss his feet.

For more than thirty years now, Thackeray has been the godfather of Bombay—or Mumbai, as he had the city renamed several years ago—and for anyone wishing to secure his favor the birthday of one of his family members is an extremely big event. As the head of Shiv Sena, the party he founded in 1966, he has a legion of thugs at his disposal, and he uses them to exert control over virtually every institution in the city. He never runs for office—he leaves that risky, soiling task to underlings. Instead, he holds court at home, in his sunglasses and necklaces and saffron pajamas, his hair dyed black and slicked into a modified Elvis pompadour. Bollywood movie stars come to pay him homage. Thackeray, who is seventy-six, is part tyrant and part buffoon, and he calibrates the combination with great skill. When a well-known film star praised a film about lesbian housewives that he found distasteful, a group of his men wearing nothing but underpants surrounded the actor's house. His reputation for vengeance is such that, when he was lampooned, as a character called Raman (Mainduck) Fielding, by Salman Rushdie in "The Moor's Last Sigh," he didn't need to say a word: Mumbai bookstores didn't stock the book for fear of reprisals, and even the central government banned it shortly afterward.

Thackeray is popular because he is funny and legendarily frank. He says that democracy has ruined India; he admires Hitler, and has spoken of him as "an artist who wanted Germany to be free from corruption." When, in late April, the Indian Prime Minister, A. B. Vajpayee, proposed normalizing relations with Pakistan, Thackeray was horrified. "Pakistan is not worthy of friendship," he declared while entertaining the press at his house, and he observed that going soft on Pakistan was bound to hurt the government in elections. After all, pandering to Pakistanis might look good to foreign leaders and diplomats, but it had been his experience that nothing was quite so effective as an old-fashioned anti-Muslim rampage for getting out the vote at home. In 1993, Thackeray was widely blamed for inciting anti-Muslim riots in which a thousand people died in less than a week; in the next elections, his party's support almost doubled.

As a fomenter of violence for political gain, Thackeray was a pioneer. Now other politicians are catching up with him. Just over a year ago, the chief minister of the state of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, was reported to have actively encouraged several days of spectacularly gruesome Hindu-Muslim riots in the hope that the ethnic hostility would boost his popularity. It did. Modi belongs to the Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P.—the radical Hindu nationalist party that now rules India—

and anti-Muslim sentiment nearly always redounds to the B.J.P.'s benefit. Last December, Modi's party was reelected in Gujarat with a majority of nearly seventy per cent. Thackeray, a B.J.P. ally, was elated, and informed the press that the B.J.P.'s decision to retain Modi as a candidate—despite, or, more likely, because of, his violent reputation—was due in no small part to his advice.

These days, Gujarat is everywhere referred to as the B.J.P.'s "laboratory." It has long been ominously supposed that if the B.J.P. won the post-riot elections there, bearing out the utility of riots as an electoral tool, the Party would use that strategy elsewhere. Sure enough, shortly after Modi's victory a Hindu-nationalist leader declared that the laboratory had "started functioning," and its Thackeray-style Gujarat experiment would soon be repeated in Delhi. Within two years, he said, India would be remade as a Hindu *rashtra:* it would abandon secularism entirely, and leave the Muslim minority to decide whether it wished to live on Hindu terms—without the civil rights that Hindu radicals see as special privileges—or depart for Pakistan. For years, Thackeray has been thought of as a marginal figure—a flamboyant regional hooligan, too wild and too outrageous to achieve any credibility at the national level. But today the Shiv Sena has fifteen members in the national parliament, and one of Thackeray's protégés is the speaker of the House. Thackeray used to be an embarrassment. Now he looks like the future.

After Bal Thackeray was blamed for riots that killed a thousand Muslims, his party's support doubled. Photograph by Raghu Rai.

MAGNUM

Upstairs in the living room, it was peaceful. Thackeray reclined on a pink vinyl La-Z-Boy, which was covered, for comfort, with a rust-colored towel. Next to the La-Z-Boy, a three-foot-high plastic fountain, designed to look like a miniature rocky waterfall, made a pleasant splashing sound. A servant—a slight man in bare feet—moved silently about, fetching things and answering the phone. On the wall hung a large, framed color photograph of Thackeray and Michael Jackson, arm in arm. (Jackson came to visit when he gave a concert in Bombay, and Thackeray boasted that Jackson had honored him by using his toilet.) He sipped sweet white wine from a champagne flute, as he does every day around noon. After each sip, he wiped his mouth carefully with a cloth napkin. Every now and again, he dipped his slender, long-nailed fingers into his glass and cast away the drops with a light flick.

"I oppose Pakistan to play cricket in my country," he said, citing an old policy of his. "When my people are massacred there in Kashmir by Pakistan, how dare you play cricket with them? Have you seen how Pearl was murdered? Putting a shoe on his face like this, put a knife into his neck and then cut his neck so his head is separated? Still you don't want to declare Pakistan a terrorist country? Do you say, bin Laden attacked, so what?" He said, "Time has come now," sounding menacing. "Time has come."

When Thackeray says the time has come, there is reason to pay attention. He is a master of the political moment. In the past, he was one of the few who foresaw the rise of the B.J.P.—now perhaps the most significant political movement in post-Independence India. When, in 1984,

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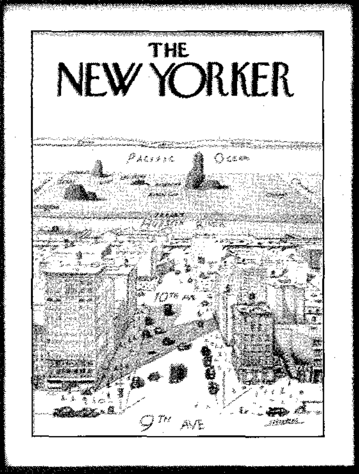

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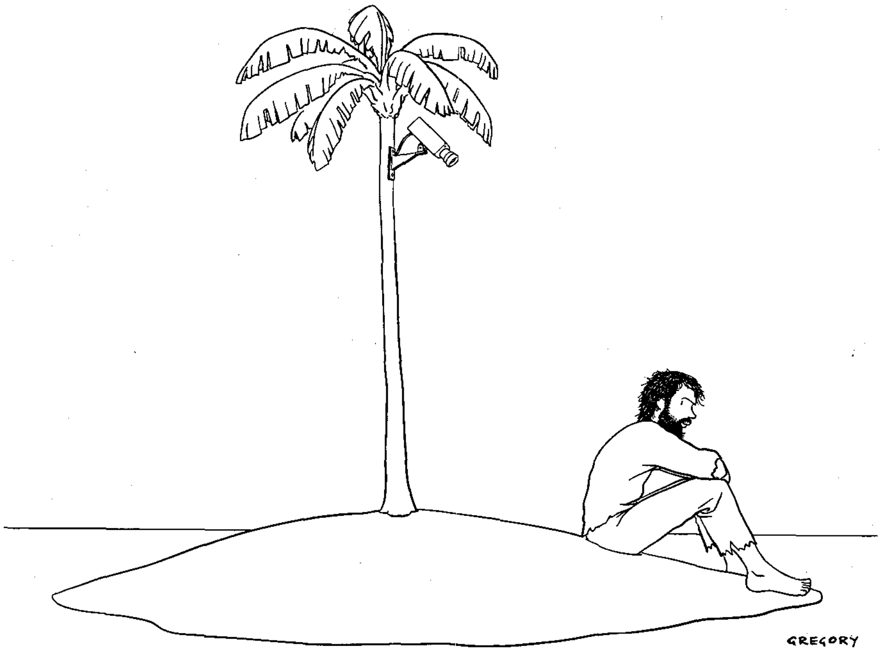
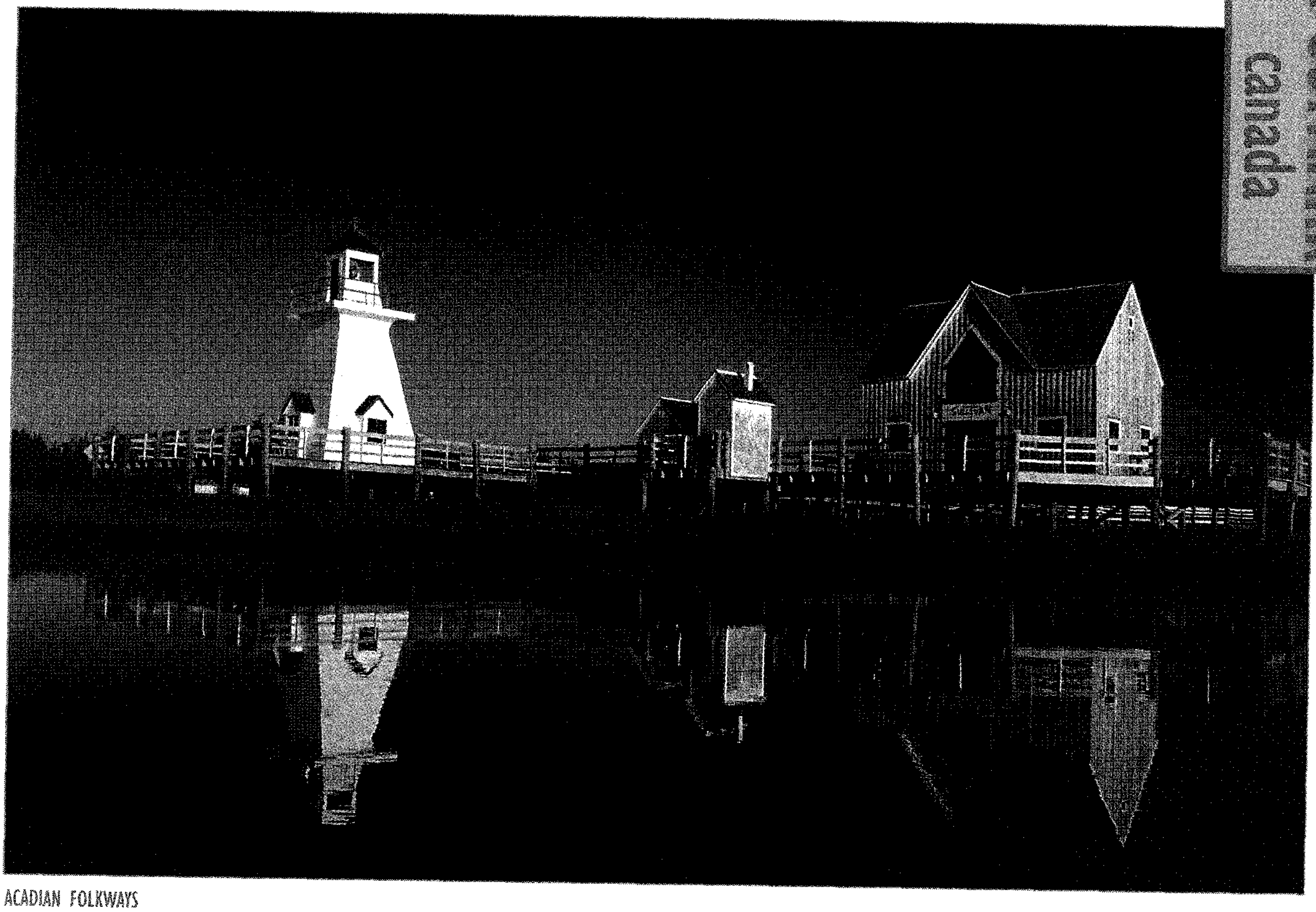
Thackeray decided to reinvent himself as a Hindu nationalist, it was a sign that something truly momentous was happening in the country. Thackeray originally built the Shiv Sena party on a platform of regional pride, which, in the sixties, was the only sort of platform that could defeat the dominant Congress Party. When he relaunched himself, he gave a speech in Shivaji Park, in Bombay, in which he assailed Muslims for slaughtering cows (sacred to Hindus) and alluded to the high Muslim birth rate. The speech provoked riots. Soon afterward, he gave an even more incendiary address, in which he reportedly declared, "Indian Muslims are cancer for this country. Cancer is an incurable disease. Its only cure is operation. O Hindus, take weapons in your hands and remove this cancer from the roots!" Muslims paraded through the streets of Bombay carrying a picture of Thackeray garlanded with shoes, and the parade was followed, a few days later, by more riots, in which nearly three hundred people were killed and more than a thousand injured. All this agitation proved to Thackeray that an anti-Muslim platform offered considerably more potential for expansion than a regional one. In 1989, he formed an alliance with the B.J.P.

Fifteen years ago, it was generally assumed that overt Hindu radicalism would never play well at the national level. But then the B.J.P. launched a campaign to reconstruct a temple. The campaign focussed on a mosque in Ayodhya, a small city in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. The mosque was built on what was said to have been the site of Lord Ram's birthplace. Some Hindus maintained that there had been a Ram temple on the site which was destroyed by the Moguls to make way for the mosque, in 1528. The B.J.P. decided that the mosque was an unendurable insult to Hindus and had to be removed. In September, 1990, L. K. Advani, who is now India's Deputy Prime Minister, launched a *rath yatra:* in a truck done up to look like a chariot from the Hindu epics, he travelled more than six thousand miles across India, accompanied by activists in costumes, with loudspeakers to project religious songs. The procession was enormously popular, attracting dancing and rallies along the route. In Gujarat, Advani was offered a jar filled with the blood of a hundred men. Although he was arrested before he reached Ayodhya, a hundred thousand Hindus went on to storm the mosque, and thirty people died, but the crowd was held back by the police. In the 1991 elections, the B.J.P. did extremely well. The following year, three hundred thousand Hindus gathered at the temple grounds and, this time, were not restrained. The mosque was destroyed, and across the country the worst communal violence since Partition ensued.

Because last year's riots in Gujarat increased the popularity of the B.J.P. and Modi so strikingly, there are any number of conspiracy theories circulating about them. Most focus on the incident





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ACADIAN FOLKWAYS

Borne out of the imagination of novelist Antonine Maillet, Le Pays de la Sagouine is a village in New Brunswick's Bouctouche awash in Acadian culture.

CLOSE CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

By Dan Ouellette

It's a fundamental, inalienable right: Wanderlust is embedded in the human psyche. Travellers may express concerns about safety and security, and avoid destinations deemed risky, but they won't be dissuaded from vacationing. Americans looking for getaways closer to home are taking to the highways to pay a call on their northern neighbor, and they're discovering just how much Canada is a singular treasure in its own right.

Foreign yet familiar, Canada is proximal (less than four hundred miles from NYC), affordable (the U.S. dollar continues to bring good value), and culturally affluent—from Ontario's wine region to the dynamic coastline of New Brunswick.

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A director of the province's Ministry of Tourism & Recreation, Sheila Larmer says that "rubber tire tourism" has been on the rise in **Ontario** (800-ONTARIO; www.ontariotravel.net). She cites a study revealing that eighty-seven per cent of all visitors to Ontario travel there by automobile. While a majority of U.S. travellers make same-day trips to the region, overnights have increased in the last year and a half.

That's good news to Marie G. Lalonde, Executive Director of the **Ontario Museum Association**, who spearheaded Ontario's annual "May is Museum Month." "These days Americans see Canada as an attractive proposition for travel," she says. "People prefer to stay where there's relative ease and safety." Celebrating Canada's cultural heritage, the monthlong event encompasses special exhibits, guided tours, and children's activities in more than six hundred Ontario museums, art galleries, and historic sites throughout the province. While the program was launched on May 1st, many of the activities will continue summerlong. "Museums play a pivotal role within the cultural landscape of Ontario," says Lalonde.

A prime example is the **National Gallery of Canada** (800-319-ARTS; www.national.gallery.ca) in Ottawa. It will present Canada's exclusive exhibition, "The Age of Watteau, Chardin and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French Genre Painting." Running June 6th through September 7th, the exhibition features a hundred paintings of

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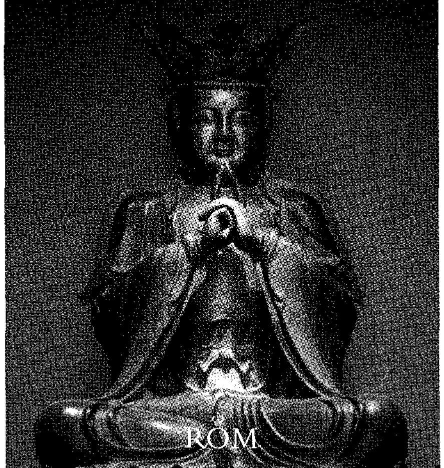

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everyday life in France by twenty-five eighteenth-century artists including Antoine Watteau, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and Louis-Léopold Boilly.

The fifth largest museum in North America, the **Royal Ontario Museum** (416-586-5549; www.rom.on.ca) in Toronto has already initiated an ambitious three-year renovation and expansion designed by celebrated architect Daniel Liebeskind. While there are no major exhibitions scheduled this summer, most of the permanent galleries, including the popular dinosaur rooms, will remain open. Beginning September 20th and continuing through January 4, 2004, the museum will host "Art Deco 1910–1939," the most comprehensive installation of Art Deco works, which will include textiles, furniture, painting, film, and architecture.

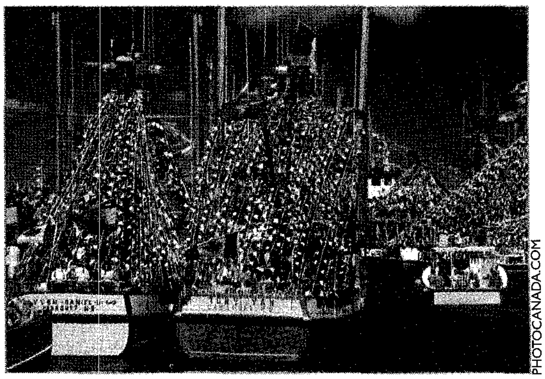
Also in Toronto, there are more than five thousand restaurants and a lively theatre scene. The city hosts the world's second largest international film festival. Now in its twenty-eighth season, the **Toronto International Film Festival** (416-968-FILM; www.e.bell.ca/filmfest) will run from September 4th through 13th this year. An hour's drive south is the Niagara region, North America's fastest growing wine and culinary destination that is home to forty wineries. This year's **Niagara Wine & Food Classic** (800-56-FALLS; www.DiscoverNiagara.com) will take place in Niagara Falls from September 5th through 7th. Vintners and world-renowned chefs partner for the event, which will include vineyard excursions, wine tastings, *cuisine* demonstrations, and winegrower dinners.

ACADIAN REVELRY

Just east of Maine, the province of **New Brunswick** (800-561-0123; www.TourismNewBrunswick.ca/Acadian) offers dramatic coastline scenery including the Bay of Fundy, the Acadian coast with its sweeping beaches, and Miscou Island's historic lighthouse. This summer the province is anticipating its four-hundredth anniversary of the first French settlement of North America, which will take place in 2004.

Appealing to both English- and French-speaking visitors, festivities abound throughout the northeastern Acadian peninsula. They are especially sportive in the vicinity of the maritime fishing town Caraquet, which will host the forty-first annual **Festival Acadien de Caraquet** (507-727-ARTS) from August 1st through 15th. It's an expansive cultural party celebrating the vitality of the region's Acadian tradition. The festival features outdoor concerts by Acadian and francophone singers and musicians, as well as exhibitions and the colorful Blessing of the Fleet.

The proceedings will climax on the Acadian National Holiday on August 15th with the "Tintamarre," a raucous parade of bon vivants commemorating the Acadian resistance to British deportation between 1755 and 1763. (While some French settlers escaped expulsion during *le grand dérangement*, or the great upheaval, over ten thousand people were forced to relocate to other areas, including Louisiana where Acadians came to be known as Cajuns.)



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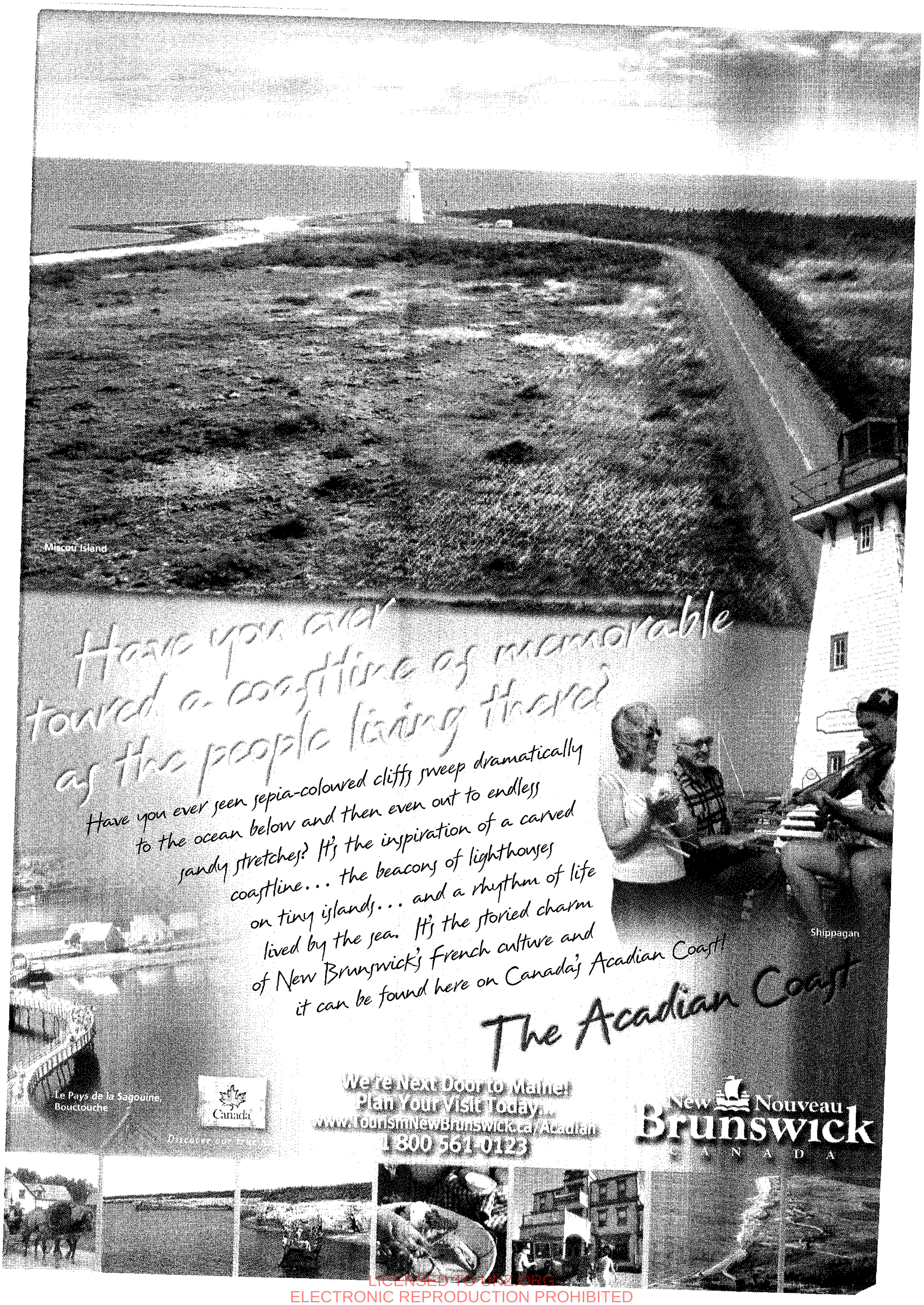
HOLY SEES

The Blessing of the Fleet during the Festival Acadien de Caraquet.

Just outside of Caraquet, eighteenth-century Acadian life is preserved at the **Village Historique Acadien** (506-726-2600; www.VillageHistoriqueAcadien.com), where residents in period costume give tours of historic homes, a one-room schoolhouse, a mill, and a blacksmith's shop. In the evening, the restored Hôtel Château Albert hosts a program of traditional Acadian songs.

"The Acadian experience is a historic odyssey, from pioneering endurance, through overcoming expulsion, to the purest celebration of our joie de vivre," says Minister Paul Robichaud of New Brunswick Tourism and Parks. "I'm proud to be an Acadian and eager to share this rich culture and our wonderful seacoast."

(Dan Ouellette is a New York-based freelance writer.)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NIAGARA FALLS

ONE WONDER AFTER ANOTHER

in Godhra, a small city in Gujarat, that started off the violence. On February 27, 2002, at around eight in the morning, some Hindu pilgrims, passengers on a train, got into a fight with a Muslim selling tea on the Godhra station platform. According to one version of the event, the passengers were abusive and refused to pay for their tea until the vender said "*Jai Shri Ram*"—praise Lord Ram. A Muslim mob gathered outside the train and began pelting it with stones. Shortly afterward, the carriage was set on fire and fifty-eight people inside were burned alive.

Many on the right speculated that the attack had been planned. After all, this was not the first altercation between Godhra Muslims and Hindu pilgrims—trains carrying contentious pilgrims had been stopping in the station every day for three weeks. But then, in July, the official forensic report on the incident was published, and it disclosed that the fire had been set from inside the train. This started a new round of conspiracy theories, now coming from the left. Was it possible that *Hindus* had set the fire, knowing that the incident would provoke riots and polarize the state, which, in turn, would likely win it for the B.J.P.? There was some evidence to support this idea. But did it mean that the pilgrims who died participated in a collective political suicide? Or had they been unknowingly sacrificed?

Rioting began the next morning. (The fact that, except for a few sporadic attacks, it didn't begin until more than twenty-four hours after the train was set on fire cast doubt on Modi's claim that it was spontaneous.) According to Human Rights Watch, thousands of Hindu activists arrived in Ahmadabad, Gujarat's largest city, by truck, wearing khaki shorts and saffron scarves—the Hindu-nationalist uniform. They carried gas cylinders, explosives, and cell phones. They also came equipped with address lists of Muslim homes and businesses, which enabled them to locate their targets with precision. Between February 28th and March 2nd, nearly a thousand people were killed, mostly Muslims. Buildings were torched with people inside them, and people on the street were hacked up and burned. Women and girls were gang-raped and set on fire. There were reports of activists cutting open the bellies of pregnant women and chopping up their fetuses. The police for the most part either did nothing or joined in the attacks. Shortly after this display of Hindu enthusiasm, Ahmadabad's first McDonald's—serving beef—opened in a Hindu neighborhood and was immediately busy. Modi's popularity soared.

Modi's office is situated in a bleak concrete tower in Gandhinagar, the capital of Gujarat. Inside, it has a dilapidated, nineteen-seventies air: the carpeting is electric blue and loosely fitted to the walls, so that in places it wrinkles. There is nothing seventies or dilapidated about Modi, however. He has a neatly clipped gray beard. He wears light, frameless glasses. In a country of hand gestures, he remains, when he speaks, almost completely still. He has the relaxed reserve of a trained witness, and as he talks he wears the expression of a man about to lay down a royal flush. Since the riots, Modi has had to contend with an enormous amount of negative coverage in the press. The most damaging article reported that on the night of February 27th, after the incident in Godhra, Modi summoned the Ahmadabad police commissioner and several senior government officials and instructed the commissioner to insure that the police allow rioters free rein. Modi denies that he instructed the police to hold back, citing, as evidence in his defense, the fact that the police shot a hundred people dead in three days.

Modi was born in a town in North Gujarat, the son of a small businessman. "I am ordinary person," he likes to say. "I am a very, very ordinary person. Very, very poor and a backward family." He writes a little poetry. ("Shri Narendrabhai Modi often takes time off from the hurly-burly of politics to indulge his muse," Modi's Web site says.) These days, Modi is very careful when he talks to the press, especially about Muslims. He says, "I do not understand why eleventh September happened in U.S.A.; why, in Indonesia, Muslims and Christians are fighting; why, in Israel, Muslims and Jews are fighting; why, in countries everywhere, one community is constant. So this is for the persons who are doing some research work: They can find out the problem."

The B.J.P. and the Shiv Sena are often referred to as Hindu fundamentalist, but the term doesn't quite fit because Hinduism has no fundament. Unlike Islam or Christianity, it has no one holy book, no central pontiff. There are as

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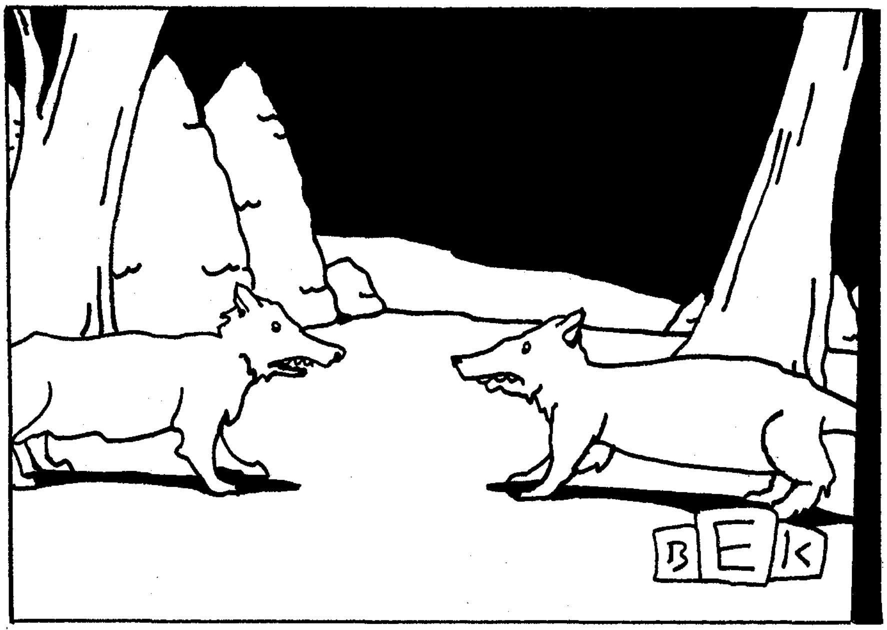

"There's nothing sick about liking to dress up in grandmother's clothing."

• •

many rituals as there are villages. The caste system is common to all Hindus, but even it tends to undermine unity, since people are inclined to identify themselves as members of a local caste group (of which there are thousands) rather than as Hindus. A Hindu may be a monotheist, a polytheist, or an atheist. Anyone who calls himself a Hindu is a Hindu, and even those who disavow the religion may also be considered Hindus. (Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism all arose as rejections of Hindu's Brahmanical domination, but now they are regarded by the right as versions of Hinduism, and are classed as such in the Indian constitution.) There is, in short, no Hindu orthodoxy of any kind—of doctrine, of practice, or of faith. And it is Hinduism's variegated quality that allows the Hindu right to make the argument that Hinduism is a kind of secularism, and that, therefore, Indian Muslims' adherence to their exclusive monotheism amounts to a refusal of a secular order. Western-style secularism, they say, is "pseudo-secularism"—the imposition of an atheistic monoculture on the historical pluralism of the subcontinent.

When Hindu activists complain about special rights for Muslims, they are complaining about a system much more radical and far-reaching than, say, American affirmative action. Books deemed offensive to Islam are banned. (Salman Rushdie's "Satanic Verses" is the best-known example.) The government subsidizes pilgrimages to Mecca—it retains a fleet of airplanes for the purpose. But the institution that irritates the right more than any other is the Muslim personal law. Muslims in India are not required to submit to the ordinary civil code: they have their own, based on the Islamic Shariah, which means that the laws governing such institutions as marriage and inheritance for an Indian Muslim bear less resemblance to the mainstream code than they do to laws in Iran. Last year, the board that negotiates the details of Muslim personal law argued to the government that the 1929 Child Marriage Restraint Act should not apply to Muslims.

When, recently, a B.J.P. politician brought up the perennial question of the personal law in parliament, arguing that it divided the country, he was answered by the Muslim League's representative, G. M. Banatwalla. Banatwalla responded that in America different states have different laws regarding marriage and divorce, and that this did not result in political disunity in the country as a whole. Banatwalla comes from an upper-middle-class family of Muslim businessmen in Bombay. He was fourteen at Independence, in 1947, and so was old enough to remember his house being stormed by a mob in the riots that accompanied Partition. "One night, there were attacks by the Hindus on various houses," he says. "So many were killed that night. Three or four times, our own house was under attack. But when the Hindus would come with all their weapons and try to attack on the gate of our building, the Muslims who lived in our building would get together behind the gate and raise our slogan: *Allahu akbar!* God is great. When hearing that, they would think we are fully armed inside or I do not know what, but they would run away. They would run away! And we had nothing."

It used to be that money could, for the most part, insulate Muslims from insults and violence, but Banatwalla feels this is no longer the case. "When you feel secure that even if you do anything—loot me, kill me—and nothing is going to happen to you, the government is in your favor, then anything can happen," he says. "Anything can happen." A menacing note enters his speech: "Oppression after oppression, suppression after suppression, injustice after injustice—that may become the breeding ground for terrorism." When someone like Banatwalla, an upper-middle-class politician from a mixed constituency, talks of terrorism in threatening tones, it is a sign of how much things have changed since the B.J.P. came to power.

Behind every triumph of the Hindu right—behind the Ayodhya movement and the destruction of the mosque, behind the B.J.P.'s hundred and eighty-three seats in parliament, behind Modi's continued popularity and the cult of Bal Thackeray—lies the colossal failure of the left. Twenty years ago, the B.J.P. was a marginal party of the Hindu upper castes and, as such, was seen as a perpetuator of historical exclusions and Brahman privilege. Twenty years ago, it was obvious to lower castes and Dalits (untouchables) that their political adversaries were the upper castes, who had for centuries barred them from temples and forced them into unclean, polluting jobs like latrine-cleaning and leatherwork. Now millions in those same lower castes, and even Dalits, have been persuaded that their true enemies are Muslims, who are, with few exceptions, even

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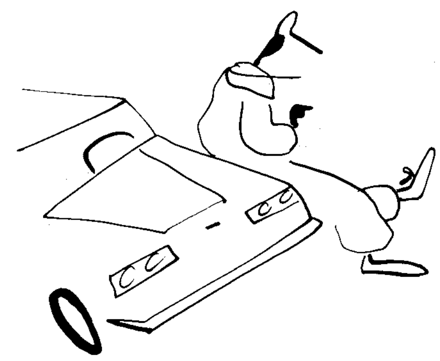
poorer, worse educated, and more frequently unemployed than they are.

The decline of the Congress Party, the left-wing party that ruled India at Independence and that for more than forty years seemed invincible, has much to do with its appalling corruption. In order to understand just what it means that Congress politicians are considered more corrupt than their fellows, it is helpful to know that, according to some estimates, one in five members of parliament and one in three members of state assemblies in India have criminal records. At one comically unabashed meeting last summer, twenty-one political parties unanimously and publicly agreed that an Election Commission order that political candidates be required to disclose their criminal records was unacceptable. (After several weeks of wrangling, the parties proposed that candidates should be required to disclose only the particularly egregious crimes that would disqualify them from running—for instance, murder, rape, abduction, or terrorism—but even then only if they had been charged with *two* such crimes.) Still, corruption is seldom a deciding electoral issue. Indians are too used to it. The real problem is Congress's failure to infuse secularism with ardor and urgency.

One Congress politician who is capable of doing so is Mani Shankar Aiyar. Aiyar can produce eloquent, impassioned sentences without preparation—he is an old debater, trained at the Cambridge Union. Even in his car, being driven one morning to a distant suburb of Delhi to deliver a speech at a school, he spoke as though reading from a manuscript. "The Hindu-nationalist philosophy is the negation of everything that has made us a nation," he said, rehearsing a theme he brings up frequently. "We are the only continuous ancient civilization in the world to have heterogeneity as its fundamental principle. Every single major religion in the world has its adherents here. St. Thomas reached India before St. Peter reached Rome; the Syrian Christian Church of India is so old that Syrian Christians may legitimately regard the Roman Church as protestant! The secular nation came into existence not because Gandhi or Nehru advocated it but because that was what we had been for five thousand years."

Aiyar is in his early sixties, but his style and his politics are those of a Congress man of fifty years ago. He clings to the vestiges of patrician socialism. He feels the British were not all bad for India. He is urbane, wealthy, snobbish, foreign-educated. His hair is cut in the floppy, side-parted style of an English schoolboy of the nineteen-twenties. Aiyar's family was not happy when he decided to run for office. "My daughters and my wife say my table manners are deteriorating," Aiyar says. "They attribute it to the company I keep. I sit with people whom you wouldn't dream of inviting to your dinner table, and with a social class from which the servants in our house come. But, far from feeling ashamed of myself for poor table manners, I'm rather proud that I've added that dimension to what I learned at boarding school."

Aiyar believes, following Walter Bagehot, that a democracy requires "sensible men of substantial means." The fact that, in India, the crème de la crème no longer aspires to public service but is focussed instead on making money is, he believes, at the root of the country's political problems. Aiyar himself attended the Doon School and St. Stephen's (the most exclusive college in Delhi) before going on to Cambridge. He was, until recently, a diplomat, so he has spent most of his adult life abroad. For Aiyar, to be Indian is to be cosmopolitan: that is the romance of India for him. But this means that when he is most passionate he speaks a language that is unfathomable to most of his countrymen. And when those countrymen are swept up by murderous religious passions they are, in turn, unfathomable to him. One of the weaknesses of Indian secularism is that it has always been tainted with foreignness. Its most respected proponent, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, was a wealthy agnostic, educated in Europe; an air of remove and privilege clings to the position.



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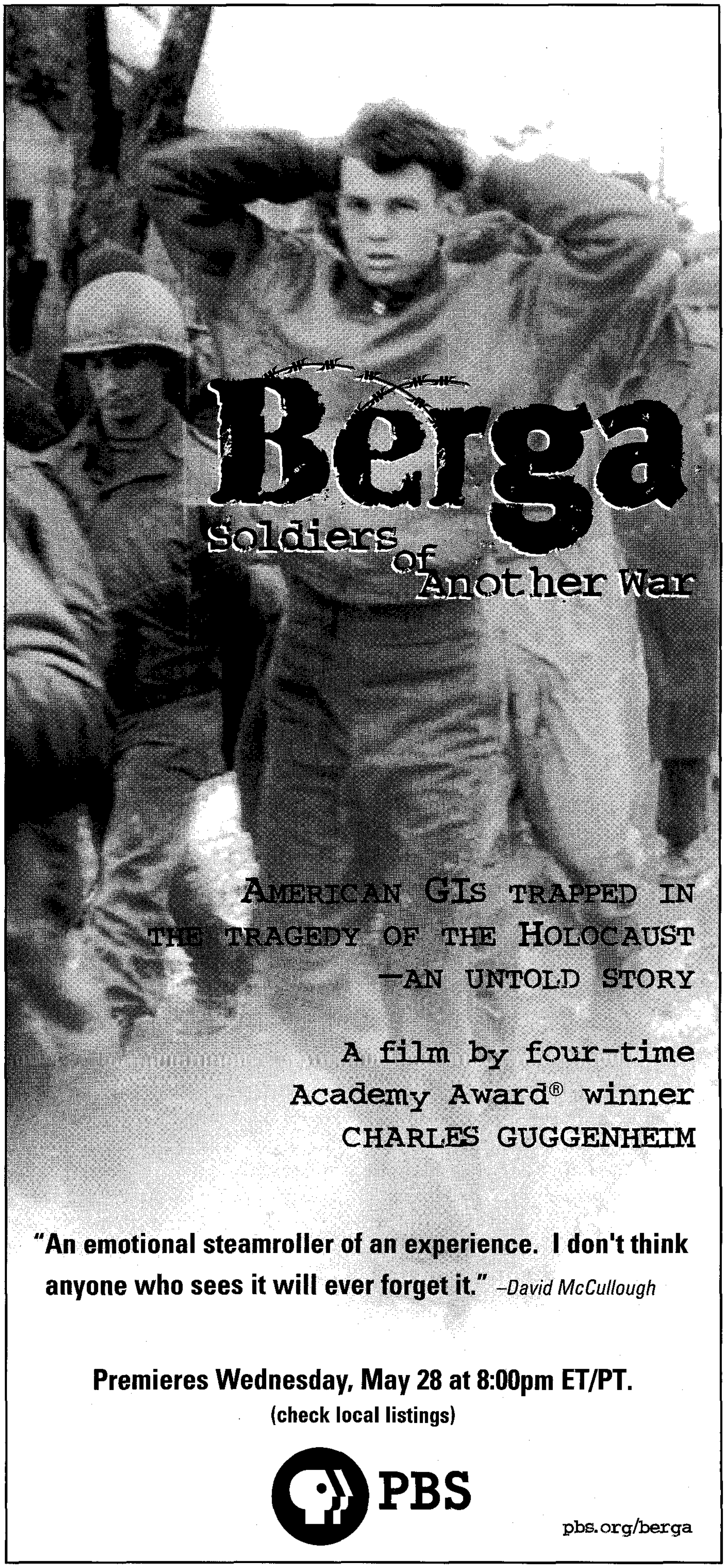
Nehru's world—Aiyar's world—has almost disappeared. Aiyar can't bring back the sensible secular men of substantial means—he can only mourn their passing. Comparing India's economic depression in the nineteen-nineties with the depression in Germany in the thirties that helped bring Hitler to power, Aiyar says, "Things can happen that you don't believe are in the realm of possibility. If you had told me in 1991 that Vajpayee is Prime Minister and Advani is Deputy Prime Minister, I would have kicked you out of court. It's been a good lesson for us. We really thought of ourselves as the natural party of governance. It didn't occur to us that we wouldn't be. It used to be said that you could travel from West Pakistan to East Pakistan without leaving Congress territory."

At a Hindu festival last fall, Bal Thackeray made a speech in which he advised Hindus to form suicide squads in order to retaliate against Islamic terrorism. "Violence is the only way," he elaborated several days later, and suggested that he be given control of the Army. The state government promptly filed a case against him under a section of the Indian Penal Code which prohibits the promotion of enmity on the ground of religion. Thackeray was threatened with arrest and up to three years in prison. It had all happened before, of course. Three years ago, the state government arrested Thackeray for stirring up religious violence with incendiary editorials; Thackeray didn't deny the charges but warned that he would refuse to accept a prison cell with a Western toilet; a judge threw out the charges after less than an hour under the statute of limitations. Life in the Thackeray household went on much as usual, and Hindu nationalism took two steps forward and one step back.

"We have nothing against Muslims," Thackeray said in his living room. He took another sip from his glass of wine and contemplated his little fountain with pleasure. "Let them be here. But: they are to accept the constitution of this country, the flag, and the rule of the land. I will not tolerate any Muslim having this type of attitude in my own country; namely, your heart there in Pakistan and your body here in Hindustan. No. Please take the body also. What that poor heart will do there alone?" ♦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VOX FOX

How Roger Ailes and Fox News are changing cable news.

BY KEN AULETTA

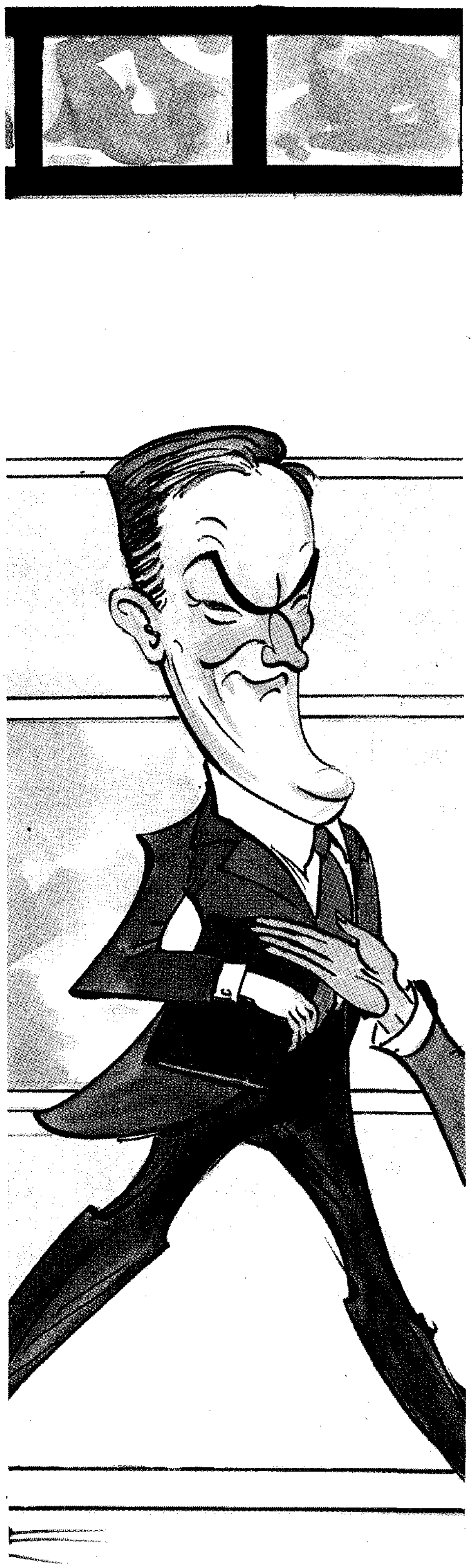
One morning not long ago, the co-hosts of "Fox & Friends," the Fox News network's raucous and right-leaning version of the "Today" show, were promoting Fox-branded merchandise such as baseball caps and soap-on-a-rope when Steve Doocy, a co-anchor, turned to his partner, E. D. Hill, and said, "You know who's really jealous about our merchandising?" Doocy, who doubles as the weatherman, answered his own question: "My dentist is so jealous. You've seen him on TV—Aaron Brown. You know, the guy on CNN—he does that show at night? He just works nights over there. But during the day he's our dentist. Do we have a picture?"

Up popped a grim photograph of CNN's principal nighttime anchor, Aaron Brown. "That man looks just like a dentist, doesn't he?" Doocy said, and soon he and Hill were chatting about whether Brown was a good dentist and what he charged for a cleaning. Brown's picture lingered on the screen for a full minute, over bold, block-lettered captions: "AARON BROWN DDS," followed by "MOLAR MAN," followed by "ARROGANT BROWN."

That bit of intramural japery, which aired on December 13, 2001, was choreographed by Roger Ailes, the chairman and C.E.O. of the sometimes raucous and right-leaning Fox News. Ailes was trying to strike back at Brown for publicly "putting us down," he says. "I don't ignore anything. Somebody gets in my face, I get in their face." Ailes requires enemies the way a tank requires fuel, and as he contemplated retaliation he kept thinking, I know someone who looks like Aaron Brown. Then it came to him. He telephoned Doocy, telling him, "Steve, just say that Aaron's your *dentist*. Then have your co-anchor say, 'He's not a dentist. He's on CNN!'" Ailes, a man of Falstaffian girth, roared with laughter, and continued, "I said, 'Doocy, no matter what happens, even if they torture you, say he's your dentist!'" For two days, Doocy followed this script, and for two days, Ailes recalled fondly, "I'm sitting here laughing my ass off."

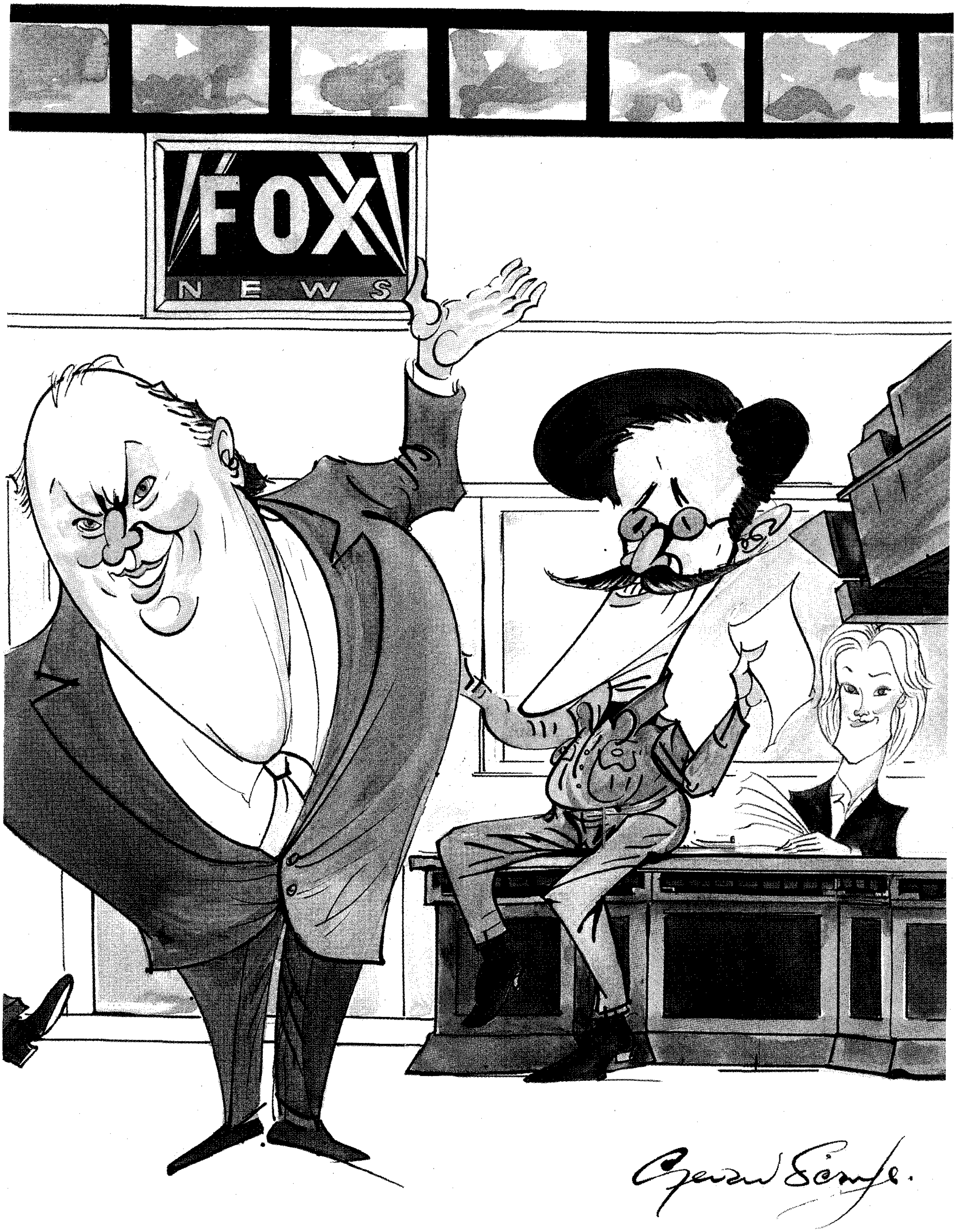
Aaron Brown, for his part, was not laughing his ass off. "I thought it was sort of juvenile," he said. "This is a little game they play. It's Roger's game. Roger seeks to define his political or journalistic opponents and destroy them."

There have been many such memories for Ailes, some playful, some brutal, all purposeful. In March, when antiwar protesters blocked traffic on Fifth Avenue and paraded in front of the Fox News offices on Sixth Avenue between Forty-seventh and Forty-eighth Streets, the electronic news ticker that wraps around the building suspended Iraq-war headlines to respond: "ATTENTION PROTESTERS: THE MICHAEL MOORE FAN CLUB MEETS THURSDAY AT A PHONE BOOTH AT SIXTH AVENUE AND 50TH STREET." Marvin Himelfarb, a former sitcom writer, wrote the ticker copy, but Ailes was his happy abettor. Of the announcements, Ailes says, "I helped with a couple." Paula Zahn recalls that when she told Ailes she was moving to CNN in 2001, "he made it very clear to me that he was not going to make life easy for me. He told me I was allowing myself to be drawn into what he called a holy war between CNN and Fox News, and that I was going to have to pay a price for that." (Ailes brought a lawsuit charging that Zahn's agent interfered with Fox's contract; it was dismissed by two state courts.) Subsequently, "Fox & Friends" disparaged Zahn, whose "American Morning" aired at the same time. Mancow Muller, the Chicago-based radio shock jock who appears regularly on the morning show, said of Zahn—screamed, actually—"I kick your ass, Paula! You take on us, we'll kill you, Paula! We'll kill you! *We will kill you, Paula!*" Walter Isaacson, who was then CNN chairman, acknowledges that Ailes's approach "constrains your ac-



GERALD SCARFE

Ailes, center, says of his aggressively competiti


FOX
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Gerald Scarfe.

ehavior that *“half of it is because people let their heads be played with and half of it is just my sense of humor.”*

tion. You wake up aware of Roger. He's always on the attack." Ailes doesn't deny that he tries to intimidate people: "I'd say half of it is because people let their heads be played with and half of it is just my sense of humor."

Ailes is sixty-three and does not look immediately fearsome. He says he is five feet nine inches tall and weighs two hundred and twenty-five pounds; his jowls droop over his collar. With his pallor and barely perceptible eyebrows, Ailes looks like someone who has spent a lifetime under fluorescent lights. In many ways, he is a throwback—to the fifties, perhaps. He slathers a morning bagel with butter and cream cheese; he often wears white shirts with French cuffs and a tie clip. Nine years ago, on the Don Imus radio program, he referred to Mary Matalin and Jane Wallace, then the co-hosts of a CNBC show, as "girls who, if you went into a bar around seven, you wouldn't pay a lot of attention, but get to be 10s around closing time."

Roger Ailes is also a television pioneer, someone who had no background in news and yet created something different in the TV news business. In large part because of Ailes, Fox News, in its short life—it débuted on October 7, 1996—has established an unmistakable identity: it is opinionated and conservative, and its news is delivered by people who themselves are often unabashedly opinionated and conservative. When Ted Turner launched the Cable News Network in 1980, CNN took the idea of all-news radio and transferred it to television. The Fox News idea was to make another sort of transition: to bring the heated, sometimes confrontational atmosphere of talk radio into the television studio.

The rise of Fox News has been swift. By 2002, it had overtaken CNN as the leader in cable news ratings. The audience for the four other cable news networks—CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, and CNN's Headline News—was generally flat last year, but Fox's expanded by more than forty per cent over the previous year.

The trend has been particularly troubling to CNN, which has always claimed that during major events viewers turn in greater numbers to CNN, which calls itself "the most trusted name" in cable news. But on March 19th, the first night of the Iraq war, Fox News bested CNN in the ratings, and did so every day for the duration of the war, according to Nielsen Media Research. On most nights, Fox's top-rated show—"The O'Reilly Factor"—attracts almost as many viewers (around three million) as all its cable-news competitors combined. On its best night during the war in Iraq, the O'Reilly show reached seven million viewers. For the first time ever in a crisis, the audience for the network newscasts on CBS and ABC dropped—two and a half per cent for ABC, nine per cent for CBS (NBC's rose slightly)—while the five cable news networks climbed by more than three hundred and fifty per cent. Fox News set the pace. Last October, when Fox's business anchor Neil Cavuto asked the chairman and C.E.O. of General Electric, Jeffrey Immelt, how he planned to improve his own cable news network—MSNBC—Immelt replied, "I think the standard right now is Fox. And I want to be as interesting and as edgy as you guys are."

"What'll it be, Mrs. Waltham—stolid workmanship or nervy brilliance?"

Roger Ailes went to Fox from NBC, which he joined in 1993, to run CNBC, its business-news channel. Journalists at NBC had worried that Ailes would be too partisan; he was, after all, a former Republican media consultant (for Richard Nixon in 1968, Ronald Reagan in 1984, and George H. W. Bush in 1988), and was known for producing Rush Limbaugh's television show. But over the next two and a half years Ailes won over many dispirited employees who had been banished to the dreary CNBC headquarters in Fort Lee, New Jersey. He placed a neon sign on the building, ordered fresh coats of paint and new furniture. He treated business news as a sport. He placed the reporter Maria Bartiromo on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, and she became known as the Money Honey. He helped make Ron Insana a star. Jack Welch, who was then the chairman and C.E.O. of G.E., says, "He made the network a combination of ESPN and the New York *Post*." On a second NBC cable channel, America's Talking, he programmed fourteen live hours a day of mostly talk shows. By 1995, CNBC alone was generating profits of about a hundred million dollars annually.

Ailes, however, did not thrive in NBC's corporate culture. He was overweight. He was profane. Welch remembers that after he had bypass surgery he instructed the G.E. executive dining room to produce healthful meals. Ailes demurred. "I'm not eating this crap!" he announced, and ordered a double cheeseburger and French fries. "Everyone wanted a cheeseburger, but he was the only one with the guts to ask for it," Welch says.

Although America's Talking went on the air in July of 1994, and Ailes signed a new contract in June of 1995, Bob Wright, the C.E.O. of NBC, had another idea: he decided to parlay America's Talking into a new cable network, MSNBC, and he wanted the new network (a collaboration between NBC and Microsoft, which paid half the startup cost) to report to the president of NBC News, Andrew Lack. Ailes thought that he had lost a power struggle to bureaucrats who "probably doubted my ability to run a business." NBC officials thought he was too volatile—not, it was said, a team player. Ailes quit.

Thinking about what to do next, Ailes phoned Rupert Murdoch, the chairman and C.E.O. of News Corp. A secretary called back to say that Murdoch was arriving in New York that afternoon and could see Ailes at five. At News Corp.'s office on Sixth Avenue, Murdoch told Ailes that he was impressed by his record at CNBC and confessed that he was frustrated. "I've been trying to get a news channel started," Ailes recalls Murdoch saying. "I've had a bunch of guys try." The two men shared a conservative political viewpoint; when Murdoch brought up CNN, Ailes agreed, "It's too liberal." Ailes explains, "I think the mainstream media thinks liberalism is the center of the road. I really think that they don't understand that there are serious people in America who don't necessarily agree with everything they hear on the Upper East Side of Manhattan." Murdoch, too, believed that CNN and the other networks and major newspapers were strongly biased.

News Corp. saw an opportunity. The Fox entertainment network, with programming like "The Simpsons" and "Married. . . with Children," had competed successfully with the broadcast networks, and Fox also owned the world's most extensive satellite distribution system. But News Corp., which owns more than a hundred and seventy-five newspapers on three continents, including the New York *Post*, had neither a network news operation nor a cable news division. Despite Murdoch's business triumphs, few took the idea of Fox News seriously. But when Murdoch told Ailes he had a business plan to start the Fox News network in eighteen months, Ailes said that was too slow: MSNBC would début before then, and Fox News ought to be on the air by the end of 1996.

EDDY'S
OVING
PERFECT HOLIDAY TOURING
Gahan Wilson

"I've got to admit I'm not crazy about the freeway."

Ailes realized that the assignment was difficult. "We had no studios," Ailes later told me. "No programs. No talent. No ideas. No news-gathering capabilities, weak stations in news, no history of news. And we had two—and looking like three—very tough competitors, with a generic product. So it was daunting when you looked at it. And we had no distribution."

Ailes had always thought that if he was running a local news station he would run ads that said, "We may not always be first. But we will always be fair." He explains, "There is an underserved market in news. . . . What I meant was 'fair and balanced.' I think I can create a market for the news." He believed that, "up until the Fox News channel, if any conservative or even libertarian got his opinion on the air, it was viewed as right wing." To Ailes, "the elimination of anybody's point of view is biased." Friends later worried that Ailes would be accused of blatantly promoting right-wing viewpoints, and he responded, "Good! That'll drive my ratings up!"

In retrospect, it was a perfect joining of politics and business; a more conservative news channel would create another niche in a fragmented marketplace. At a 1998 Sun Valley management retreat, Peter Chernin, the president and chief operating officer of News Corp., declared that media companies have "to seize the edge, because the most dangerous thing in the anti-bland world is to play it safe. And it must leap out with brand identity."

On January 30, 1996, Ailes stood next to Murdoch at the public announcement of a Fox News channel and was introduced as its chairman and C.E.O. "I told Wright in 1996," Jack Welch remembers, " 'We'll rue the day we let Roger and Rupert team up.' "

MSNBC hurried to create a news channel that they said would harness technology and "revolutionize" news coverage. Ted Turner vowed that CNN would squish Murdoch "like a bug." CNN's corporate parent, Time Warner, then the second-largest cable company in America, at first denied Fox News any access to its cable system, provoking a Murdoch lawsuit. Ailes fought back, and eventually eighty-two employees left NBC for Fox; when an NBC lawyer phoned to suggest that by recruiting its employees Ailes was tampering, Ailes responded, "You don't know the difference between recruitment and a jailbreak."

The promotional tag lines that Ailes wrote were as snappy as any he had designed for a candidate: "Fox News. Fair and Balanced" and "We report. You decide." Ailes borrowed one other technique common to political campaigns: he lowered expectations. Five days before Fox's scheduled début, he called fifteen executives to a staff meeting at 4 A.M. He wanted to jolt them, one Fox executive recalled, and "he wanted the world to think, Hey, Fox may not launch in five days."

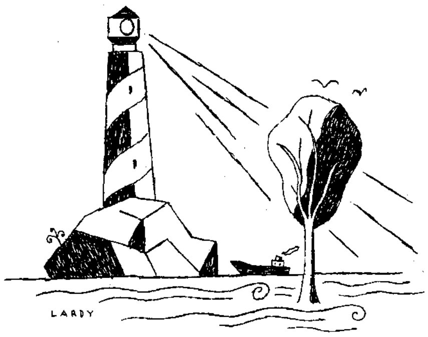
It was not an auspicious launch. Fox News had access to seventeen million homes; CNN had seventy million, and MSNBC twenty-two million. There were embarrassing glitches. To inaugurate the news channel, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to an interview, but midway through the segment Fox lost the feed from Israel.

From the start, Ailes and his team say they knew what Fox News would look and feel like. America's Talking was the idea, acknowledges Jack Abernathy, who worked for Ailes at NBC and joined Fox News as chief financial officer. "I knew we could come in here and create a credible news service at a fraction of the cost that people had expected," he said. Ailes, too, acknowledged that his model had been America's Talking, but that's not what he told the Los Angeles *Times* in October, 1996: "We're going to be basically a hard-news network," providing "straight, factual information to the American people so that they can make up their own minds, with less 'spin' and less 'face time' for anchors." Neil Cavuto, a business anchor at CNBC, had been among the first to sign on. "A lot of people thought I was a little crazy leaving all that," he said. "NBC and CNBC matched the money. But I really thought the opportunity was great here and I really like Roger. I felt he was an exciting guy to work for. And he was a funny guy to work for." Cavuto added, "I don't worry about things like 'Will I have a job or job security.' I have multiple sclerosis. I've had cancer. . . . If I'm living, I wake up in the morning and I'm still breathing, that's a good start." John Moody, who had spent fourteen years at *Time* and seven years overseas for U.P.I., signed on, too, as vice-president in charge of news. Moody is usually as understated as Ailes is brash. But he had come to believe that *Time*, like other media outlets, had succumbed to an unconscious but powerful liberal bias. Another important hire was Brit Hume, who was for years the White House correspondent for ABC and became Fox News's Washington editor.

Ailes also recruited Bill O'Reilly, a former CBS and ABC correspondent who was the anchor for the gossipy syndicated show "Inside Edition." O'Reilly had left the show and was studying for a master's degree in public administration at Harvard's Kennedy School. Ailes, who liked O'Reilly's style and his directness on camera, is very clear about what he believes works on television. In his hybrid memoir, "*You* Are the Message: Getting What You Want by Being Who You Are," he writes that a key lesson is to be a "proactive—not a reactive—communicator." It takes seven seconds to make an impression on others, he calculates, so the passive communicator will fail. Often, Ailes writes, when he was evaluating talk-show hosts as a broadcasting consultant, he would watch television with the sound off. "If there was nothing happening on the screen in the way the host looked or moved that made me interested enough to stand up and turn the sound up, then I knew that the host was not a great television performer."

Ailes's—and Fox's—moment came more than a year later, in early 1998. In much the way that the O. J. Simpson trial helped to create an audience for Court TV, Fox News found its perfect story in President Clinton's affair with a White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. A few months earlier, Ailes had told Brit Hume that he wanted him to anchor a political hour at 6 P.M. When the scandal broke, Kim Hume, who is the Washington bureau chief, told her husband that they should get the show on the road. The Humes consulted Ailes, who startled them by saying, "We'll do it tonight!" That night, Ailes moved Bill O'Reilly, who until then had conducted an interview program with relatively weak ratings, to 8 P.M. Thus began "The O'Reilly Factor."

This was a significant moment, NBC's Bob Wright says. "Talk radio shows started to go crazy with it"—the widespread resentment at Clinton's misdeeds. "We were not paying as much attention to it at NBC News. And MSNBC wasn't. CNN wasn't. And what Fox did was say, 'Gee, this is a way for us to distinguish ourselves. We're going to grab this pent-up anger—shouting—that we're seeing on talk radio and put it onto television.' "



Ailes insists, "We covered impeachment 'fair and balanced.' " But the Clinton impeachment tapped into a core conservative base. "Here is the issue we faced when we started," Brit Hume says. "There were a certain number of people out there that had given up on network news, because they just couldn't take it. . . . What we needed was a story they simply couldn't take their eyes off." More important than the Lewinsky scandal, he believes, the 2000 election and the Florida recount were "of such pressing, passionate interest that people couldn't stop watching. It was a little like the [1991 Gulf] war was for CNN. It would change two or three times a day, and be reversed three hours later. We immediately put our top political correspondents in Florida—we took them away from the candidates and put them in Florida and went after that story as hard as we could with the best people we could." Fox News was the first network to declare George W. Bush the victor.

By then, Ailes had many reasons to be pleased. He had got married for the third time—to Beth Tilson, who had been the vice-president of programming at America's Talking—and in January, 2000, they had a son, his first child. At about the time of the 2000 election, Fox News was in fifty-five million homes and had broken even, much earlier than expected. Ailes got a new three-year contract from Murdoch. By the spring of 2001, Fox News often bested CNN in both the morning and the evening ratings.

The Clinton scandals helped Fox to find its political base, but the attacks of September 11th had a more profound effect: Fox, far more than any other television enterprise, went to war. And in doing so it defined itself. To be sure, news coverage in wartime tends to be less reflective, more emotional; in the aftermath of the deadliest attack on American soil, this was particularly so. But Ailes and Fox News went further. Geraldo Rivera, whom Ailes had recruited from CNBC to be a war correspondent, armed himself

LITTLE APOCALYPSE

The butterfly's out on noon patrol,
dragoning down to the rapt flower heads.
The ground shudders beneath the ant's hoof.
Under cover of sunlight, the dung beetle bores through his summer dreams.
High up, in another world,
the clouds assemble and mumble their messages.
Sedate, avaricious life.

The earthworm huddles in darkness,
the robin, great warrior, above,
Reworking across the shattered graves of his fathers.
The grass, in its green time, bows to whatever moves it.
Afternoon's ready to shove its spade
deep in the dirt,
Coffins and sugar bones awash in the sudden sun.

Inside the basements of the world,
the clear-out's begun,
Lightning around the thunder-throat of the underearth,
A drop of fire and a drop of fire,
Bright bandages of fog
starting to comfort the aftermath.
Then, from the black horizon, four horses heave up, flash on their faces.

—*Charles Wright*

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with a pistol and proclaimed that he would be honored to kill Osama bin Laden. Fox anchors and reporters spoke not of "United States troops" but of "our troops." Fox graphics identified the captured American Taliban recruit John Walker Lindh as "Jihad Johnny." Ailes wrote to the President, urging him to strike back hard. Fox News dramatized its presentation with whooshing sounds heralding new headlines and flashing titles—"Breaking News" or "News Alert." (In February, when the United States raised the terror-alert level from yellow to orange, every cable news network used the bottom of the screen to warn viewers of a "Terror Alert High" and a "News Alert." On a visit to New York, Laura Bush scolded the networks for "frightening people.")

A former correspondent told me that it was common to hear Fox producers whisper, "We have to feed the core." In an interview last December with the New York *Observer,* Al Gore described Fox as a virtual arm of the Republican Party. "Something will start at the Republican National Committee, inside the building, and it will explode the next day on the right-wing talk-show network and on Fox News and in the newspapers that play this game," Gore said. "And pretty soon they'll start baiting the mainstream media for allegedly ignoring the story they've pushed into the zeitgeist." Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a Fox News commentator, refers to CNN as "the Clinton News Network"; he describes his employer as if it were a closed circuit to fellow-insiders: "If I go on the Fox network, no question that people in the Administration see that. If there's one channel on in a Washington office that I visit, it will usually be Fox."

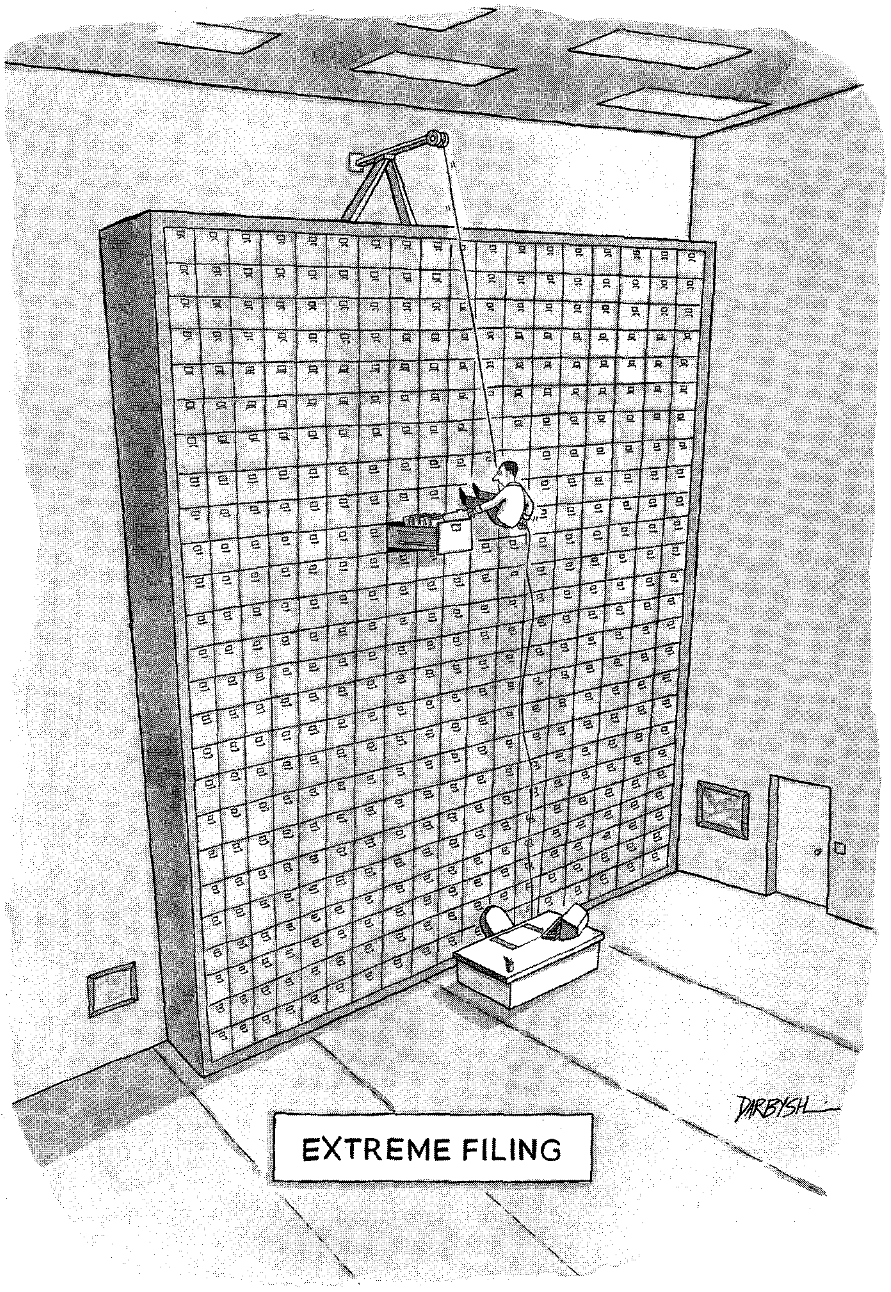
By the fall of 2001, Ailes was already fighting a private war. In response to Paula Zahn's defection to CNN, he hired CNN's Greta Van Susteren to host a nightly talk show. He also accused CNN of being overly solicitous to America's enemies. "Suddenly," Ailes told Jim Rutenberg, of the *Times,* "our competition has discovered 'fair and balanced,' but only when it's radical terrorism versus the United States." His criticism was aimed at all the other networks, although CNN remained his primary target. Ailes's fervor attracted more viewers to Fox News, and he made clear to his own troops that one bias was acceptable: "The one thing I say to our folks is 'This is a pretty good country. Before you make the conclusion that America's wrong first, always leave an open mind that there might be something good here.' "

Many journalists resented the insinuation that journalistic independence—reporting, say, on Afghan civilian deaths or military mistakes—was somehow unpatriotic. "Coming out of 9/11, something happened that made people feel that if you questioned anything you were liable to be labelled unpatriotic," Marcy McGinnis, CBS's senior vice-president for news coverage, says. "It was kind of scary to me." The ABC News president, David Westin, says, "I like 'We report. You decide.' It's a wonderful slogan. Too often, I don't think that's what's going on at Fox. Too often, they step over the line and try and help people decide what is right and wrong."

In a survey by the Pew Research Center, forty per cent of CNN and forty-six per cent of Fox News viewers regarded themselves as "conservative." What is different at Fox, according to Andrew Kohut, the director of Pew Research, is the "intensity" of its viewership. Nielsen Media Research does not dissect political views when measuring audiences, but it did find that, typically, Fox viewers between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-four watched seventy per cent more news than CNN viewers. Ailes insists that people watched not because they were conservative but because Fox was the "most interesting" network.

To be sure, when one considers the entire television audience, the share that belongs to Fox and its cable cohorts is minuscule. Prior to the war in Iraq, on a typical weekday the thirty-minute evening newscasts on NBC, ABC, and CBS reached more than thirty million viewers—twelve times the audience at that hour of the five cable news networks combined.

Viewers of Fox News quickly discover a Niagara of opinion, which is consistent with Ailes's view. "Cable is an edge business," he explains, alluding not just to attitude or opinion but also to Fox's faster



EXTREME FILING

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pace. "Brian Williams has no edge, so he sits there and mumbles in his nice shirts and can't get through." According to Ailes, cable disdains "pompousness" and values sharp opinions. Such opinions come regularly from the hosts of "Fox & Friends," which drew a bigger cable audience from 7 to 9 A.M. in 2002 than CNN's Paula Zahn or MSNBC's simulcast of the Imus radio show. From 9 A.M. to 3 P.M., Fox features stories and reports from its bureaus and covers government press conferences. (Fox, to its credit, devotes more time to the workings of government than its rivals do.)

Unlike its competitors, however, Fox lets its daytime anchors intrude with opinion—usually opinions consonant with the Bush Administration's. Fox News became a magnet for conservatives much as Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based satellite station, did for its more than thirty million Arab viewers. On January 27th, John Gibson, an afternoon anchor, described a war protest in Davos, Switzerland, as composed of "hundreds of knuckleheads." On February 11th, Steve Doocy talked about those in Congress who favor some exceptions to strictures on immigration—for instance, for the families of victims of the September 11th attacks. "Guess who's giving sympathy to illegal immigrants linked to terrorists," he said, and showed a video of Senator Hillary Clinton: "You're looking at her." On February 23rd, when it was clear that France would oppose an American resolution at the U.N., the anchor Bob Sellers described France as a member of the "axis of weasels." This phrase, first published in the New York *Post,* became a refrain on Fox News; it often appeared in a banner at the bottom of the screen. (Asked if he approved, Ailes told me, "We shouldn't have done that, if we did. I would call that bad journalism." The practice didn't stop.)

In the weeks leading up to the war, Fox anchors kept announcing, "The coalition of the willing continues to grow," saying that some thirty countries now supported the United States, but rarely noting that this was a distinct minority of the world's nations. (On CNN, the senior White House correspondent, John King, pointed out that the coalition of the willing essentially consisted of the three nations whose troops were engaged in combat—the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.) Fox placed the conservative talk-radio host Oliver North with a Marine unit as an embedded correspondent. On the eve of war, North passed along to Fox viewers "rumors" that French officials at the Embassy in Baghdad were destroying documents proving French complicity in Iraq's chemical- and biological-weapons programs. These "rumors" proved false, and a spokeswoman for Fox, Irena Steffen, described North to the *Times* as "a military contributor to Fox. He is neither a reporter nor a correspondent." When Fox anchors assured viewers that images of Saddam Hussein's statue falling would let the Arab world see America as a liberator, the correspondent Simon Marks, in Amman, Jordan, warned that "the Arab street" was angry, and that it would take diplomacy to convince people that this was not "an American war of occupation." This prompted the anchor David Asman, a former *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer, to say, "There's a certain ridiculousness to that point of view!" Neil Cavuto ended an interview with Republican House Majority Leader Tom DeLay this way:

"You know, a lot of your loyal fans, Mr. Majority Leader, say, That has a nice ring to it, but they like 'President DeLay.' You interested?"

As Fox News has pulled farther away from the cable competition in the ratings race, no one piles up higher ratings than—or outshouts—Bill O'Reilly, who announces that his program is a "no-spin zone." When I met with him recently, in his office on the seventeenth floor of the News Corp. building, O'Reilly, who is six feet four, was sitting at a small desk cluttered with clippings and research material. Besides his weeknight Fox program, he has a syndicated radio show and a newspaper column. He sees himself as a victim of stereotype, surrounded by a press corps that is seventy per cent hostile and "vicious." O'Reilly delights in deprecating the "élite" press. "These people, not only in the print press but other network people, and some powerful people in board rooms, are basically frightened of the Fox News channel," he said. "They understand that the power has shifted into an organization that is right center."

O'Reilly did a little spinning himself when I asked if he was often rude on the air. "If you count the times I've shouted in the last six months—maybe ten," he said. He turned the question around: "I have six minutes per segment. If you don't answer the question, I think that's rude."

Asked why Fox does so well, O'Reilly had a ready answer: "Because we're daring. Because we're entertaining and interesting and different—stimulating." The other networks, he went on, are "too timid and hide-behind—'CNN: We're the journalists.' Oh, bullshit." O'Reilly called Connie Chung's cancelled program "a tabloid show that rivals what I did at 'Inside Edition'—I mean, we were tougher, we did investigative stuff on 'Inside Edition.' "

O'Reilly says that Fox owes much to Ailes. "Roger Ailes is the general, and the general sets the tone of the army. Our army is very George Pattonesque. We charge. We roll. The other armies that we're competing against are very Omar Bradleyesque. They're defensive players. They're cautious. They don't go into uncharted territories. They don't outflank. They play it the way it's been played for forty years. Those days are over." O'Reilly did not spin *Advertising Age*. Asked whether a more accurate tag line for Fox might be "We report. *We* decide," he replied, "Well, you're probably right."

Roger Eugene Ailes, who was born on May 15, 1940, comes from Warren, Ohio, a tiny factory town near Youngstown. He was one of three children, with an older brother and a younger sister. His father worked at first as a laborer at Packard Electric, which made wiring for General Motors; his mother was a housewife who embroidered handkerchiefs and dispatched Roger, at age ten, to sell them door to door. During high school and college, Roger worked summers for the state highway department, sometimes digging ditches. His mother would tell him, he remembers, " 'You always have to have goals.' My mother in some ways was sort of difficult. Because my brother was such a good student, she was always on my ass because I didn't love school. If I got a B, she'd say, 'Why didn't you get an A?' . . . If I got an A-plus, she'd say, 'Did you get the highest grade in the class?' You couldn't please her." He adds, "My mother would have been a C.E.O. of a corporation in today's world."

When Roger was eight, he was hit by a car and hospitalized. During his convalescence, he had to learn to use his legs again. His father would take him to a track to practice. Once, he fell and landed in a pile of horse manure. His father had no patience. "Don't fall down and you won't get that crap on you!" he said. Roger has another vivid boyhood memory of his father. "I used to see college boys"—he spits out the words—"give my dad orders in the shop in an inappropriate manner." He once asked his father why he let them talk to him like that. After a long pause, his father said, "Son, because of you, your brother, and your sister. I need the job, and you kids have got to go to college so you don't ever have to put up with this."

Roger enrolled at Ohio University, in Athens. He spent four years at the college radio station, as a disk jockey and a sportscaster, and dreamed of making a living that way. He was nineteen when his parents telephoned to announce that they were getting a divorce. It was abrupt. "I went home and everything was gone," he said. "My house wasn't there. My room wasn't there. My stuff wasn't there. . . . I never found my shit!" He rarely went home on holidays or in the summer, volunteering to work "the holiday shifts" at school. His mother soon moved to San Francisco and remarried. His father eventually remarried, too. Roger talked to his parents on the phone but lost touch with his home town. "Their attitude was, when you get to be eighteen, you go to college and you're on your own," Ailes said matter-of-factly. Around the time of his parents' divorce, he married a classmate, a marriage that lasted fifteen years.

When Ailes was a senior, he had a job interview with the program manager of a Cleveland television station. The manager, Chet Collier, remembers him as a slender, self-confident young man. "I was impressed with his enthusiasm, his willingness to think in different ways," Collier recalls. Collier was helping to launch a local talk-variety show, "The Mike Douglas Show," on KYW-TV, and hired Roger as a production assistant at sixty-four dollars a week. The show caught on, and was soon syndicated nationally. One of Roger's chores was to meet guests at the airport—celebrities like Jack Benny, Bob Hope, and Pearl Bailey—and drive them to the studio. Soon he was writing the cue cards for Douglas, which was much the same as posing the questions.

Collier now works from his home in Florida but remains close to Ailes; he was the second person Ailes recruited to devise programming for America's Talking, and was a key programmer at Fox News. "Standing there, he looked like most people," Collier recalls. "Then he talked, and he got you excited." Sometimes Ailes got too excited. Once, he threw a bullying advertiser off the loading dock into the snow. And once he slammed the executive producer up against a wall. In both cases, Ailes says, he erupted because someone "had abused little people." To this day, he says, he follows this code: "Don't mistreat people who work for you." (He doesn't *always* follow it, observes a Fox executive who knows him well. "He can be really mean. . . . He yells at 'little people' unnecessarily.") Three years after Collier hired him, Ailes became the executive producer of "The Mike Douglas Show," which had by then moved to Philadelphia.

Richard Nixon entered Ailes's life in 1967, when Nixon was booked to appear on the Douglas show. Any prominent figure passing through town might be invited onto the show, and it fell to Ailes to come up with a good mix. Nixon hated being on television. Ailes knew that he didn't want the former Vice-President sitting in the greenroom with Little Egypt, a belly dancer who performed with a boa constrictor, so he put Nixon in his own office. When Nixon learned that he was to follow Little Egypt, he said, "It's a shame a man has to use gimmicks like this to get elected."

"Television is not a gimmick," Ailes, who was then twenty-seven years old, replied. Furthermore, he said, the candidate who mastered television would win. They discussed this for about ten minutes, and a few days later Nixon's staff invited Ailes to New York. They met for three hours on a Sunday. Ailes, who describes his father as a "Taft Republican," says, "I never thought too much about politics." When he was invited to join the campaign, what appealed to him was the challenge. "Everyone said the man could never get elected because of television," Ailes says. "The challenge was more to me—it had nothing to do with politics. In fact, all my work with Nixon had nothing to do with politics. It was a media problem. It wasn't a political problem."

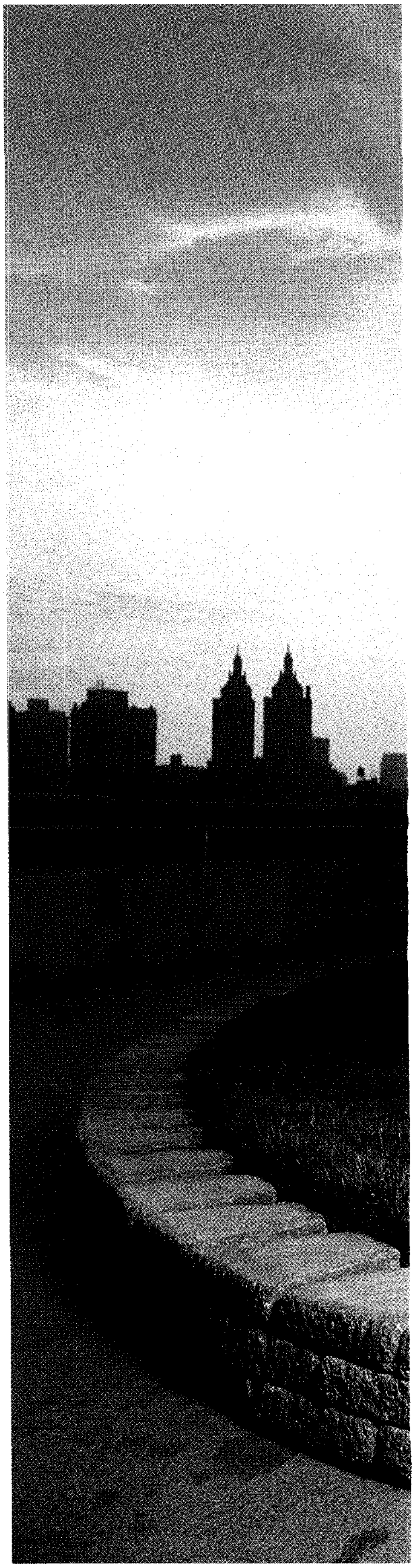
The first writer to get inside a modern media campaign for President was Joe McGinniss, at the time a columnist for the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. His 1969 book "The Selling of the President" quotes Ailes on his thinking at the time: "Let's face it, a lot of people think Nixon is dull. Think he's a bore, a pain in the ass. They look at him as the kind of kid who always carried a bookbag. Who was forty-two years old the day he was born. . . . Now you put him on television, you've got a problem right away. He's a funny-looking guy. He looks like somebody hung him in a closet overnight and he jumps out in the morning with his suit all bunched up and starts running around saying, 'I want to be President.'" Ailes's task was clear: "To make them forget all that." He created a "man in the arena concept," in which Nixon didn't have to read from a teleprompter or stand at a podium but instead fielded questions from what looked like a wide range of citizens but was, in fact, a prescreened audience. He did not believe it was possible for viewers to warm to Nixon. This format allowed people, Ailes says, "to respect him by showing that he was smart."

Nixon was already President when the McGinniss book was published, but he was appalled that a reporter had infiltrated his campaign. McGinniss says that Nixon's aides all denied that they had coöperated with him, except Ailes. Not surprisingly, Ailes was not invited to mastermind Nixon's 1972 reëlection effort.

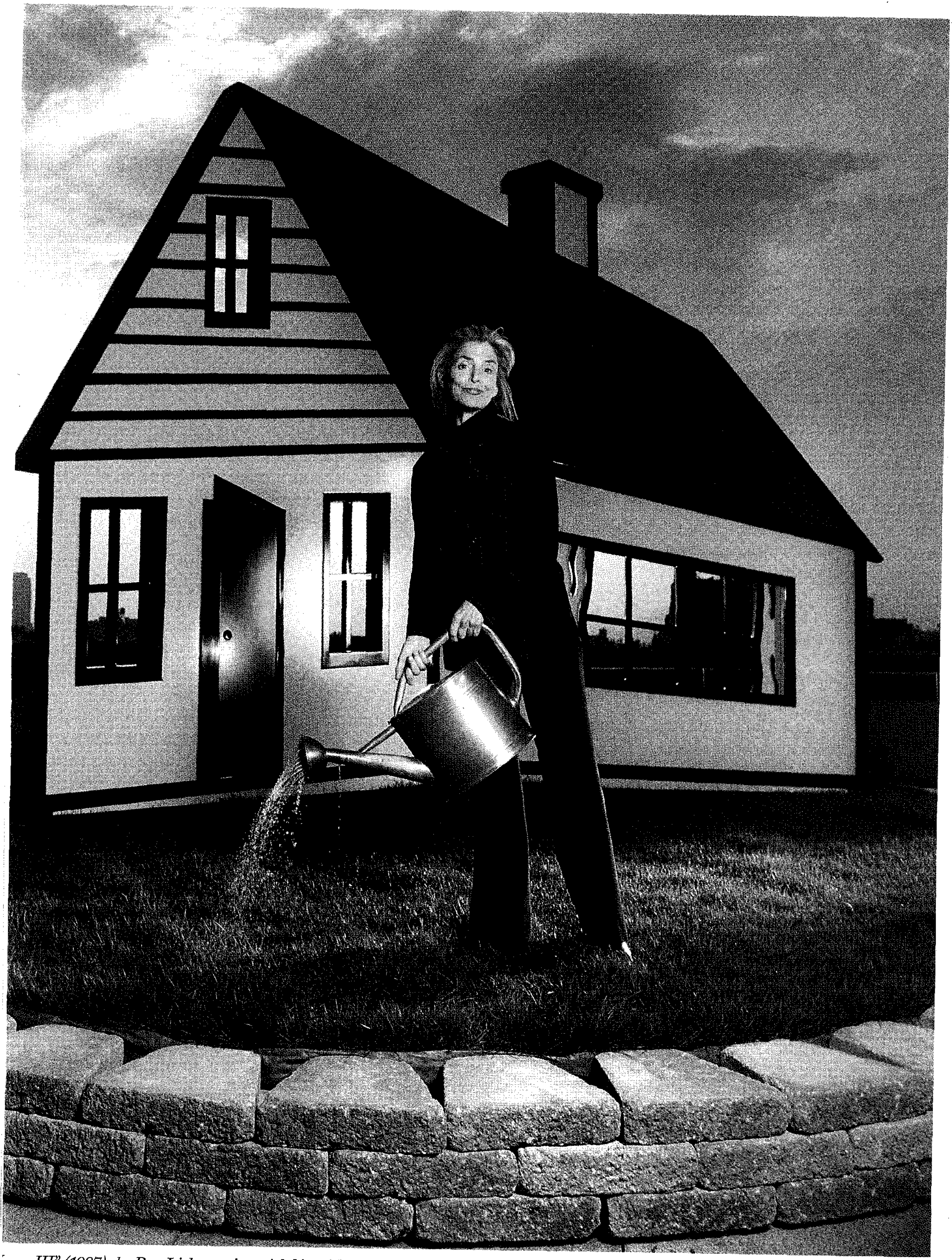
Ailes says that he respected Nixon's intelligence and many of his policies, but adds, "I felt sort of sorry for him. He was socially uncomfortable." If Nixon were a candidate today, Ailes adds, "he would be allowed to go on Oprah and plead that he was an abused child. And the liberals would have to love him!"

After Nixon's victory, Ailes formed Ailes Communications, and consulted with corporations and Republican candidates. He co-produced Broadway and Off Broadway plays, among them "Hot L Baltimore," and television specials. He was a commentator on the "Today" show. Ailes returned to Presidential politics in 1984, when he was brought in to coach Reagan for his second debate with Walter Mondale.

In 1988, Ailes signed on for Vice-President Bush's effort to succeed Reagan and helped to orchestrate one of the nastiest media campaigns ever. Ailes agreed with Bush's campaign manager, the late Lee Atwater, that Bush needed to overcome his "wimp" image and do more than lower his own negatives in the polls; he had to raise the negatives of his Democratic opponent, Michael Dukakis. One night, according to an account by Peter Goldman and Tom Mathews, of *Newsweek*, Ailes had a dream about a recent disastrous campaign appearance in which Dukakis had been filmed riding in a tank. Ailes got up, jotted the word "tank" on a pad, and went back to sleep. Within two days he had started production of a spot with a voice-over enumerating the defense-spending programs that the Governor



COUNTRY LIVING BY DUDLEY REE



ouse III" (1997), by Roy Lichtenstein, with his widow, Dorothy. Six Lichtenstein sculptures are currently on display in the Met's roof garden.

of Massachusetts opposed. As the voice cited the programs, one saw Dukakis's head sticking out of the turret of a tank and capped by a helmet with headphones that looked like Mickey Mouse ears. Dukakis became the wimp—a liberal élitist who was pro-taxes, pro-criminals, pro-defense cuts, and even pro-polluter. Ailes "has two speeds," Atwater told *Time.* "Attack and destroy."

Ailes knew that he had muddied his own reputation. His adversaries, he said, tried "to smear me with racism" for devising anti-Dukakis television spots that featured a black felon, Willie Horton. Ailes denies responsibility for those ads. By 1991, he had quit working with political clients. He says he was tired of the travel and of the political game. "I hated politics. The candidates were getting weaker and younger and dumber, and I was getting older and wiser." He did take on more corporate clients, and some overseas political clients, including Jacques Chirac, who was then the mayor of Paris. When NBC recruited Ailes, in 1993, he eagerly turned the consulting business over to his partner, Jon Kraushar.

Fox News has alarmed its competitors. In 2001, Jamie Kellner, who helped Barry Diller launch the Fox broadcast network in the mid-eighties and later designed the youth-oriented WB network, became chairman and C.E.O. of Turner Broadcasting. Kellner says that his charge was to focus "on television presentation and promotion skills" and to build more "stars," though "without in any way changing the journalism." More people watched CNN, he says, but the people who watched Fox continued to stay tuned for longer periods.

CNN copied Fox's whoosh sound to introduce breaking news; it explored the idea of talk shows featuring the conservatives Rush Limbaugh and Pat Buchanan and the liberal Phil Donahue—then worried that this might dilute the CNN brand. Rather than successive newscasts that once filled an estimated seventy per cent of CNN's schedule, the network moved toward programs like Zahn's "American Morning," "Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer," "Talk Back Live," and Connie Chung's 8 P.M. interview show. CNN correspondents complained that it was harder to get airtime for actual news. Walter Isaacson, the CNN chairman, disputed this, and said that what CNN was doing differed from what Fox did: "You make the programs dependent on news, not the opinion of the host."

By 2002, morale at CNN was down. Ailes not only put a movable Fox billboard in front of Zahn's studio on the day of her début but bought a large billboard across from CNN's Atlanta headquarters. "I heard it was available and that everyone who walks in the building has to look at it," Ailes explained. When Greta Van Susteren's 10 P.M. Fox show went ahead of Aaron Brown, or "Fox & Friends" got better numbers than "American Morning," Ailes put a fresh message on the billboard to remind CNN. Kellner could see the billboard from his office. "It's not nice," he says. "You're in the news business. It should be a higher playing field." (Nevertheless, CNN bought a billboard on Sixth Avenue across from Fox News to tout Zahn's show.)

Morale was also hurt by budget cuts and by the sharp drop in the valuation of AOL Time Warner stock. Allan Dodds Frank, who is fifty-five, had been a CNN correspondent for eight years, and before that he was a correspondent for ABC, *Forbes,* and the Washington *Star.* He was the investigative correspondent for "Moneyline," and won the Gerald R. Loeb Award in 2002. He was laid off last December, as was Brooks Jackson, an expert on campaign contributions and influence peddling in Washington. "They are overreacting to Fox and deciding that everything has to be live, no matter how little sense it makes," Frank says. "The first rule of zoology—or journalism—is: You can't out-ape the monkey."

There was a growing sense that CNN was doing just that—imitating Fox but not getting it right. There were complaints about the perceived superficiality of Connie Chung's program; the most hurtful of these came from Ted Turner himself, who told a reporter that Chung's show was "just awful." Privately, CNN correspondents complained that Lou Dobbs, on "Moneyline," was issuing conservative opinions. ("Isn't it time someone said something straightforwardly?" he said on February 11th, before denouncing France as "obstructionist.")

Ailes believes that CNN faltered because it got too comfortable: "I don't think they trained for competition. They also built a huge bureaucracy. They're still operating on four times the number of people that I have. Yet I don't see a lot going on up on their screen that we're not doing at least as well. They have a little more coverage in various locations, but they have a lot of people sitting around playing checkers, waiting for something to happen."

It is a measure of CNN's strategic confusion that in March of 2002 Isaacson held a full-day retreat in Atlanta, inviting about forty senior CNN executives. Isaacson told me that the proposals discussed came down to two options: reduce the network's forty-two bureaus and move toward an opinionated talk format, or keep the emphasis on news. The consensus was to stay with news. To all this, Kellner said, "You're right. You have to go with your strength and stay a classy network." Isaacson added, "MSNBC went the Fox way. CNN reacted slowly—too slowly—but we did go the other way."

Nevertheless, in early 2003, Kellner resigned and Isaacson accepted an offer to head the international Aspen Institute. Isaacson says of the television business, there was "not much time to pause and reflect and look ahead. I like knowing what the third paragraph will be." Isaacson was replaced by his deputy, Jim Walton, who had joined CNN a year after it went on the air. The journalists at CNN would be pleased to hear Walton say, as he did to me, "We want to be accurate and timely. . . . Notice that I didn't say I wanted to be first." He also said, "It's not enough to have higher ratings" if CNN "dumbs down" to get them.

Fox News seemed also to rattle MSNBC. When MSNBC went on the air, in July of 1996, three months before Fox, it relied on NBC News talent, it drew upon its rich video library, and it recruited a great many on-air commentators. Then it switched formats. It promoted an hour-long newscast anchored by Tom Brokaw's designated heir, Brian Williams, then switched his program to CNBC. It promoted Ashleigh Banfield, a relatively inexperienced reporter, sent her to Afghanistan, then gave her a nightly program, which was later cancelled. Phil Donahue's hour-long show was cancelled, although it was their top-rated program. Asked if there were too many formats and changes at MSNBC, Bob Wright, the C.E.O. of NBC, concedes, "That certainly is true recently. Probably in the last two and a half years. That's a criticism, and it's a fair one." MSNBC's president and general manager, Erik Sorenson, who oversaw these changes, says, "I think we've lacked directional consistency. We over-experimented." MSNBC's ratings today are about a third of Fox's and half of CNN's.

The president of NBC News, Neal Shapiro, who has nineteen television monitors in his office, appears to see the competition as one between the hedgehog and the fox, with Fox as the hedgehog. Shapiro praises Fox for "sticking to a few things," while noting that MSNBC did not. He said he now planned to put more NBC News talent on its cable network and build up its identification with the network. "By day it will be much more association with NBC. By night it will be smart analysis"—led by Chris Matthews and a new roster of talk-show hosts, including former Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura and such conservative commentators as former Congressman Joe Scarborough and former House Majority Leader Dick Armey. "The premise of all these people is that our people don't just talk—they know what they're talking about," Shapiro said. He did not mention the right-wing radio talk-show host Michael Savage, who recently got a weekly show and does "just talk"—so intemperately that Procter & Gamble and Dell withdrew their advertising. "Cable news," Ailes says, "is beginning to change the agenda of what is news."

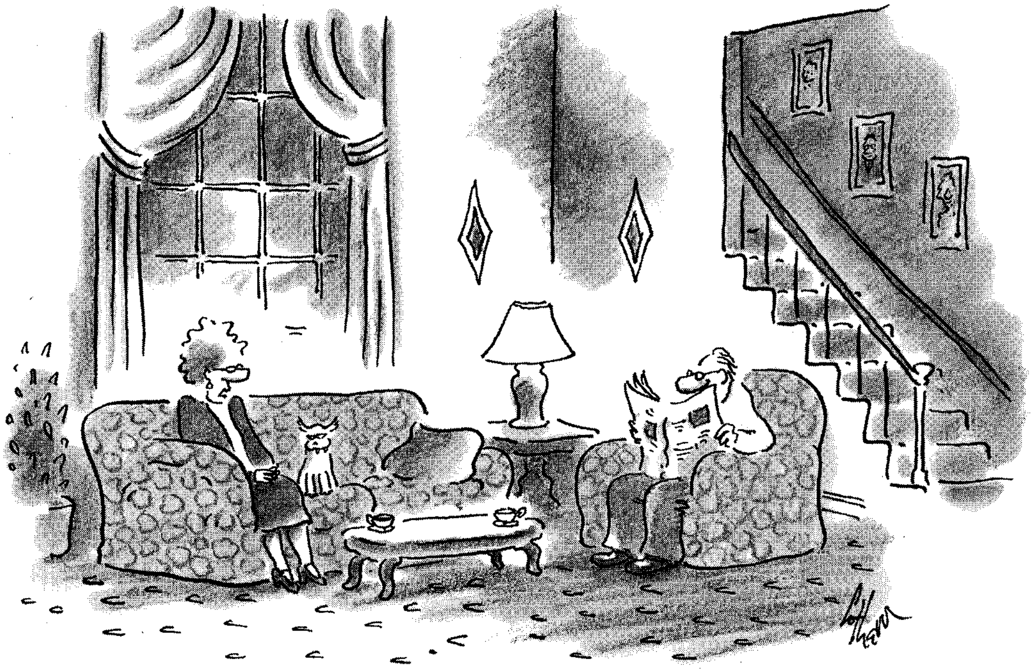
As for allegations of partisan coverage, Ailes will not admit that Fox is "right center," and insists, "I think I've forced the entire world to deal with 'fair and balanced.'" He portrays himself as nothing less than a high-minded news executive: "I'm not saying I'm the answer. But . . . there hasn't even been a story where we've been accused of tipping some big story to the right in seven years. Why hasn't it happened? Because we're honestly trying to do a good job."

CNN executives and others believe that Fox tips right all the time. In a thinly disguised slap at Fox, a marketing slogan touted CNN as "News. Not Noise." Dan Rather, of CBS, concedes that he doesn't watch much Fox News, but he thinks Fox is a reflection of Rupert Murdoch's political views. "Mr. Murdoch has a business, a huge worldwide conglomerate business," Rather says. "He finds it to his benefit to have media outlets, press outlets, that serve his business interests. There's nothing wrong with this. It's a free country. It's not an indictable offense. But by any clear analysis the bias is towards his own personal, political, partisan agenda . . . primarily because it fits his commercial interests."

Neal Shapiro believes that the networks are now more sensitive to any ingrained liberal bias. "We talk about it constantly," he says. "I think it's sensitized newsrooms, and that's a good thing." It is widely supposed—and hard to document—that reporters at major news organizations tend to be more liberal, which inevitably influences coverage. "I think the traditional broadcast media does have a slightly left-of-center bias," concedes Paul Friedman, who has produced NBC's and ABC's evening newscasts and was most recently the executive vice-president of ABC News. "It's not so much in what is said. It's in the choice of what to cover." The networks, he went on, tend to choose "social-agenda stories"—AIDS, poverty—"rather than stories about the flag or religion."

Some conservatives believe that liberals deliberately promote an agenda. Brit Hume's view is that the alleged liberal bias in mainstream media is unconscious. "My sense is that very few reporters, if any, that I've ever known are closet political activists or actually have agendas," he says. "There is, however, a very widely shared set of assumptions and values. It's very unusual to find reporters who are pro-life. It's unusual to find reporters who don't think more gun control is a good idea. It's not common to find reporters who are enthusiastic about the idea of a tax cut."

Todd Gitlin, of the Columbia Journalism School, frames it somewhat differently. He believes that Fox and the conservatives have bullied a "lazy" and servile press into submission. Of Ailes, Gitlin observes, "I think that his talent is percussive. Fox News has a tone. The tone is what it delivers. The tone is urgency—crashing noise. Occasionally, this



"Let's update our will and go on vacation."

entails interesting debate. More likely, it entails bluster. . . . Fox certainly accelerated the sense of panic at CNN." Fox's greatest influence, he says, is "felt in Washington. I find it hard to believe many Fox viewers believe Bill O'Reilly is a 'no-spin zone,' or 'We report. You decide.' It's a joke. In Washington it reinforces the impression of 'we happy few who are members of the club.' It emboldens the right wing to feel justified and confident they can promote their policies."

Certainly the success of Fox has permitted Rupert Murdoch to promote his own agenda. When New York Governor George Pataki denounced proposed new state taxes, the April 30th front page of the *Post* read like an editorial: "AT LAST, A LEADER WITH GUTS." Last year, Murdoch wanted the Bush Administration to block, on antitrust grounds, the merger of the two largest satellite operators, which the Administration did. This let Murdoch reënter negotiations to buy America's largest satellite operator, DirecTV, a deal that went through in April (it awaits the approval of the Bush Administration). Murdoch also wanted the Administration to lift the cap on the percentage of American households that one company's TV stations can reach; earlier this month, the staff of the Federal Communications Commission proposed the change.

In part because of the success of Fox News, Murdoch—with DirecTV, British Sky Broadcasting, Star in Asia, and satellite systems in Latin America—has created a worldwide competitor to CNN and the BBC. Jack Welch, for one, is deeply impressed: "If Rupert gets DirecTV, his whole position in the communications arena changes. He now has all the distribution. He has programming assets. And his options are now as big as his appetites."

For Ailes, a typical day begins when he is chauffeured from his northern New Jersey home to his office, arriving before 8 A.M., having already read the *Post*, the *Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Ailes's office on the second floor has seven TV monitors, but few personal items; there are no pictures of his wife or their three-year-old son—in fact, there are no photographs at all. On the wall opposite his desk is a picture of George Washington's Valley Forge headquarters. The windows provide an unobstructed view of Sixth Avenue, but to the north the venetian blinds are drawn so that he won't have to look toward the electric CNN and NBC signs two blocks away. A huge open file cabinet is dedicated to "evidence" Ailes has collected of the press's liberal bias. His curved cherry-wood desk is free of papers, and his "in" box is usually empty. Buttons on his phone connect him to various news executives, including the news chief, John Moody, who says that a long beep is "not my favorite sound." Also on his desk are two Bibles—"They're old friends," he says.

The first meeting of Ailes's day is usually the 8 A.M. news meeting, which he hosts in his office. Moody puts together a list of the stories to be pursued and is accompanied by a team of news executives; they were joined on February 25th by Brit Hume, on the speaker phone. Ailes hung up his suit jacket and sat at his desk. He listened as Moody started with an overview of the big news stories. Moody mentioned that British Prime Minister Tony Blair had dismissed the French resolution before the U.N. to extend the arms inspectors' deadline. "It's a scam," Ailes said, and added that he was looking at some numbers last night showing that France, Russia, and China had major trade ties with Iraq. "We ought to look at the import-export situation there."

Geraldo is in Turkey, Moody said.

"Do you have him under control, so he's not going to do any hotdogging?" Ailes asked.

"Under control is a relative term," Moody replied.

"He has understood that any wild moves over there can get our other guys killed, right? Have we made it very clear?" Ailes asked. "Geraldo is a good journalist and he's a team player, but you do have to speak to him very directly." He added, "Just tell him no hotdogging."

Moody said that, in an interview to air that night on CBS, Saddam Hussein told Dan Rather that he would not destroy the missiles that U.N. inspectors said he must. Ailes asked if Rather was required to turn his tape over to the Iraqis and let them edit it. Although the answer was unclear, Ailes worked himself into a lather. Voice rising, he said, "Did they have pre-look at his questions? . . . Was anybody in the room with a weapon?" He added, "I have less of a problem in getting in a room with Sad-

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"Damn it, gentlemen, these are medieval times. They demand medieval ideas."

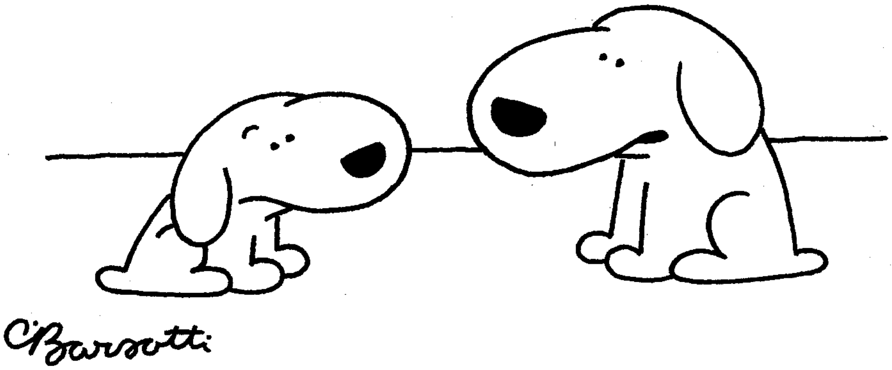
dam Hussein with ground rules as long as those ground rules are disclosed." He complained that *Time* did not disclose the ground rules of what he called an "anti-American interview" with Jacques Chirac that it carried that week, and said it was "a total setup." He went on, "Nowhere in the *Time* magazine interview do they say, 'Mr. Chirac, do you have any business dealings with Iraq? Mr. Chirac, is there a one-hundred-and-twenty-billion-dollar oil contract with Iraq? Mr. Chirac, weren't you the guy that went over and set up a nuclear reactor? . . . How about the seven million Muslims down the street that are going to blow up the Eiffel Tower? Does that bother you?' There are a few other questions that a few other *good* journalists would work into the interview."

Ailes discussed coverage of the tension between the United States and North Korea and its implications for Asia. Throughout the meeting, Ailes would interrupt with something he had read or heard, in a style that was part oracle and part standup comic. He mentioned that he'd heard that MSNBC had allegedly set up a small team to seek out more conservative, populist stories. "They'll fuck it all up," he said. He couldn't believe, he told me after the meeting, that MSNBC had failed with Chris Matthews. Ailes hired Matthews at America's Talking, but thinks he talks too much: "If Chris Matthews worked for me, he'd be doing better. . . . I wouldn't let him answer everybody's question for them. He asks the question. Then he answers it. Then he asks you what you think of his answer. Then he goes on to another question. At some point, he's got to let the guest answer. I'd say, 'Chris, if you don't shut the fuck up I'm going to fire you!' "

Later that day, someone told Ailes that MSNBC had just fired Phil Donahue, and Ailes was pleased to learn that his senior vice-president for corporate communications, Brian Lewis, was prepared to attack. "We're putting it out that Donahue's numbers were higher than Matthews'," Lewis said. To the news that MSNBC had lined up Jesse Ventura and Joe Scarborough, Ailes said, "It's their attempt to move right." Ailes said that Chris Matthews, in MSNBC's 7 P.M. slot, often does monologues. "The last guy to do a good monologue on TV was Fulton J. Sheen," he said.

"And he had a good writer," an executive said.

"Yeah—God!" Ailes said.



"Yes, they are crazy, but they can open the fridge."

Fox News is capable of solid work and straightforward reporting, as when it covered the devastation caused by the recent tornadoes in the Midwest. In Iraq, Rick Leventhal and Greg Kelly, embedded war correspondents, broke more than their share of exclusives from the front and provided vivid pictures. Brit Hume asks acute questions, listens to the answers, and usually tries to be balanced. Correspondents like Eric Shawn and Jim Angle, at the White House, are industrious. And although the culture at Fox is partial to the Bush Administration, it was Fox News that broke the story on the eve of the election that George W. Bush had once been arrested for drunk driving. "I knew it would hurt him," Ailes said. "They said we should hold it. We ran it. We're in the news business and we do what's news." During the murder trial of Michael Skakel, the correspondent Eric Shawn recalls that Fox titled one of his pieces "Kennedy Cousin Trial." Ailes "thought it wasn't fair," so he called the control room and had it changed to "Skakel Trial." On other occasions, Ailes says, he killed a story about Al Gore's son getting a speeding ticket—he thought a teen-ager deserved some privacy—and a story in 1998 exploring how Bill Clinton, as governor, had used state troopers to do more than protect him, which Ailes thought was "piling on."

At the same time, CNN, which once called itself "the world's news leader," saw the Iraq war largely through American eyes. And MSNBC, like Fox and the Bush Administration, called the war "Operation Iraqi Freedom" and duplicated Fox's display of an American flag in a corner of its screen. In mid-April, the MSNBC anchor Natalie Morales read a report that said the French Foreign Minister had cautioned the United States not to start a war in Syria, saying, "We have to concentrate on giving the Iraqi people the victory they deserve." Morales then looked into the camera and seemed to ad-lib: "The Minister might want to save 'we' for countries that actually fought to give Iraqis their freedom!" Watching this, Ailes called out, "They've gone right wing!"

MSNBC had a major embarrassment in late March, when Peter Arnett, a correspondent for "National Geographic Explorer," who doubled as NBC and MSNBC's eyes in Baghdad, let himself be interviewed by Iraqi television, saying that America's "first war plan has failed because of Iraqi resistance" and that "our reports about civilian casualties" and Iraqi resistance help "those who oppose the war." Fox feasted on Arnett's bad judgment, and Arnett was quickly fired. Around the same time, Geraldo Rivera, who was embedded, drew for his viewers a diagram in the sand, letting them know where his unit was and how it planned to attack an Iraqi position. That gave MSNBC the chance to report that the military was furious and planned to expel Rivera. At first, Rivera denied that he had been ordered out of the country, but later said that he would be relocating to Kuwait. When MSNBC produced a promotional ad declaring that it would never "compromise military security or

"I'm trying to put my priorities behind me."

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jeopardize a single American life," Fox ran an ad, approved by Ailes, attacking Peter Arnett: "He spoke out against America's armed forces. He said America's war against terrorism had failed. He even vilified America's leadership. And he worked for MSNBC." It didn't matter that none of it was true. Ailes says he pulled the ad after it aired once because the spat was unseemly.

For the Iraq war, Fox News had twelve hundred and fifty full-time and freelance employees and seventeen bureaus, only six of them overseas, and operating costs of about two hundred and fifty million dollars. Last year, a senior Fox News executive told me, its revenues were three hundred and twenty-five million dollars and its profits were seventy million dollars. (This year, the profits are expected to double.) By contrast, CNN had four thousand employees and forty-two bureaus, thirty-one of them overseas, and total news costs of about eight hundred million dollars. Its revenues, according to a senior executive, climbed above a billion dollars last year, and its profits totalled two hundred and fifty million dollars. MSNBC, according to Bob Wright, essentially breaks even; CNBC, with its business audience and its cable-subscriber fees, generated profits last year of about three hundred million dollars.

Neal Shapiro, of NBC News, saw the war in Iraq as an opportunity to rebrand MSNBC by benefitting from its pool of NBC News stars. Shapiro dispatched a hundred and twenty-five journalists and crew members to the region; CBS sent a team of a hundred, and at one point ABC had twice as many in the region. The BBC also sent two hundred people to the Gulf.

Ailes knew that Fox had to rely on only fifteen correspondents in the region. "We don't have the resources overseas that CNN and other networks have," said Rick Leventhal, who was with the 1st Marine Light Armor Reconnaissance unit. "We're going in with less money and equipment and people, and trying to do the same job. You might call it smoke and mirrors, but it's working." CNN had forty-nine correspondents in the region, eighteen of them embedded with American troops. Ailes told his financial staff that the challenge is "not to let this war be a win for CNN. If I have to, I'll go upstairs and argue for extra money. I'm not going to let these sons of bitches beat us!" He wanted the financial people to understand that a war with Iraq was also a war between Fox and CNN.

This degree of involvement reflects Ailes's enormous competitiveness. Rick Leventhal described a Christmas party at the home of Shepard Smith, who anchors the 3 P.M. and 7 P.M. news hours. Smith has an eight-foot pool table at his loft on the Lower East Side, and he and Leventhal, who are skilled players, attempted to hustle Ailes. "I haven't played in twenty years," Ailes said. A crowd of about forty Fox News employees gathered to watch the boss get taken by two pool sharks. Ailes says he was "pissed off," and remembered the time he and his brother challenged their father to a race home. Their father let them get ahead and tire, and then he sped past them. By the time they got home, he was sitting on the grass, laughing. "You know the difference between an average horse and a champion?" he asked his sons. "A champion always has something left when it comes around the last turn."

Of the pool-table challenge, Ailes said, "They had no understanding of how important that game of pool suddenly became to me." When it was his turn to shoot, Leventhal recalled, Ailes proceeded "to make a series of ridiculous shots and to win the game." Ailes said, "Every time someone thinks I'm beat, I always have something left."

My four-month immersion in Fox News left me skeptical of its claims of "fair and balanced." When I asked Ailes about what seemed one-note coverage and the disproportionate number of conservative commentators, he said that he beseeched his staff to "book Democrats," but they told him, "They won't come on. They're hiding." Fox does have a stable of liberal commentators, including Sean Hannity's partner, Alan Colmes, and NPR's Mara Liasson, who appears with Hume, but they are often overpowered by the conservatives around them. And there is Susan Estrich, who was Michael Dukakis's campaign manager. Ailes likes her but calls her "hard core," a term he does not apply to right-wing Republicans.

Looking back on Fox's coverage of the war, Ailes acknowledged that mistakes were made, and blamed many of them on fatigue and on the speed it takes to produce a hundred and sixty-eight hours a week of live television, which inevitably leads to "sloppiness." He said that he played a watchdog role during the war, and would call the control room or news desk at any time of day or night to insure balance. "If I see bias of the left or right, I will complain about it," he says. It is possible that this was one of the rare times in his sixty-three years that no one was listening to Roger Ailes.

Ailes's contract is up at the end of this year, and a source close to him says that it wasn't until early April that his lawyer was approached about a new one. Ailes and Murdoch have an easy rapport, but Fox executives say that his relationship with the chief operating officer, Lachlan Murdoch, is not so relaxed. Ailes battles often with Fox's owned-and-operated broadcast-station group over when and how to air Fox News, and this group reports to Lachlan Murdoch. Friends say that Ailes sometimes fears he will grow stale and should try something new, such as running a television entertainment division or even a network. In recent weeks, negotiations between Ailes's lawyer and News Corp. have accelerated.

Ailes is a wary man, but not in the way most journalists are wary. "Roger's sort of thesis of the world is that they're out to get us," Brit Hume says. "It makes him the most alert competitor you've ever seen. He's not always right about that, but he's always alert. And it makes him very hard to sneak up on—it's very hard to do anything that Roger hasn't already anticipated." What surprises colleagues is that Ailes appears actually to disdain journalism; Ailes says that he detests what he thinks of as "élite" journalists with "a pick up their ass" who treat journalism as "a from-the-Mount profession." Some senior executives at Fox express private puzzlement that Ailes seems, in the words of one, to "hate journalists so much. . . . I've never seen him use the word 'journalism' and smile at the same time."

Over lunch one day, I suggested to Ailes that although he bridles at being stereotyped as a former political operative, he stereotypes others—"Thirty per cent of New York City teachers are too stupid to teach!" he told me. And he stereotypes journalists. "I do," he replied, ripping a hunk of bread from a loaf and spreading butter on it. "And it's unfair, because they're not all like that. . . . There are some journalists I will talk to, there are other journalists I won't talk to." He insisted, "If I hated journalism that much, or had that little confidence in journalism, or thought that it had made that little contribution to the republic, I frankly would walk away from it and ignore it and make money and say, 'Screw it. You can't fix it.' " Asked to identify his journalistic heroes, Ailes paused for several seconds, before saying, "I've never thought of journalists as heroes. I think of journalists as very bright people with enormous responsibilities that they often don't live up to. Now that I'm doing this job, I can't live up to it every day, either, because I have ratings pressure, financial pressure—all the things that I have. But there are certain things that I just won't do."

I asked if he would have published the Pentagon Papers, and his response revealed not only an aversion to the press but an uncharacteristic uncertainty: "I won't do anything that will jeopardize national security. . . . Does that mean I will cover up for America? No." Reminded that the papers were, essentially, the Pentagon's own history of the Vietnam War, he said, "I never thought there was a huge problem with the Pentagon Papers," and he conceded that the Nixon Administration was paranoid about the press. Finally, he said, "Maybe the story should have been reported, and Ellsberg"—Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the papers—"should have had the shit beat out of him for stealing. Of course, the press would never beat the shit out of him for stealing, and that's sometimes why the press lacks morals. The end justifies the means, as long as the end justifies their political view."

At the core of Ailes's journalistic philosophy, he says, is a belief that the press should "seek to be watchdogs, not attack dogs." He says he dislikes journalists who are "gratuitous brutalizers"—an odd sort of fastidiousness from the man who sponsors such verbal gunslingers as Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity. "I try to force Bill to be more fair," Ailes says. "I try to force all my people to be fair." But to Ailes fairness doesn't mean selecting the stories or the amount of time devoted to the victims; it means giving them airtime. Ailes says, "If anybody has a complaint, we put them back on another show to have their say. But we are in a time medium that depends on outgoing, aggressive talent to get ratings."

Although he has never worked as a journalist, Ailes believes that his campaign-consulting work and his years as a producer prepared him to run Fox News. "You learn the issues from everybody's point of view, left and right," he said. "I actually have a broader and deeper knowledge of most issues than probably some news guys, because I've actually read position papers on a lot of this stuff, both left and right. I've learned you don't move Election Day back, but I knew that from broadcasting—in other words, whatever you do, you better make your decision and get it done, you better get your show on the air . . . because you don't get any second chances."

Seated behind his clean desk, the television monitors silently running, Ailes sounded less like the man who created a fierce, right-leaning news network than like someone who sadly bears the burdens of a journalistic reformer. "The hardest part of my job is now to maintain any kind of journalistic standards, because they're being weakened all over the country by newspapers and magazines," he says. Once more, he brought up the *Time* interview with Chirac, then moved on to other targets: "*Newsweek* is just an anti-Bush publication put out by the D.N.C. every week. . . . Dan Rather is over there letting Iraq edit the tape. At some point, you've got to say, 'What are we doing here?' "

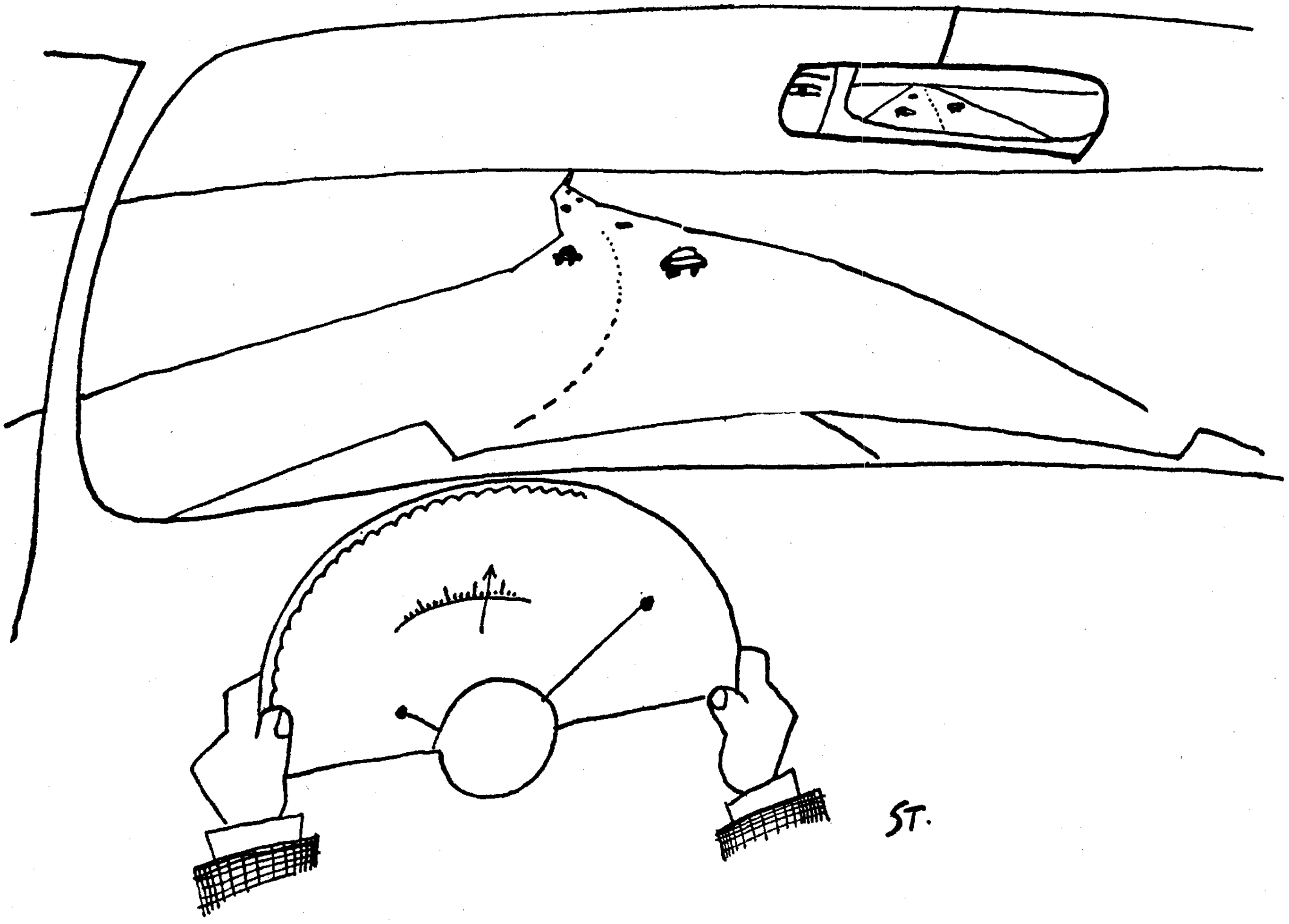
Aaron Brown, whose face is on the CNN billboard outside Ailes's window, believes that he understands what Fox is doing. "I honestly think they do something quite different from what we do," he says. "I hesitate to say this, because I don't want to create a sense that they're in the same business we're in. . . . They've done a very good job with marketing slogans. They came up with two good slogans. To me, they lead with their opinions. There's room for conservative talk radio on television. But I don't think anyone ought to pretend it's the New York *Times* or CNN." It would not make Roger Ailes happy to know that his "dentist" got the last word. ♦

PERSONAL HISTORY

ROMANCE

Car trips in the nineteen-thirties took you to some unexpected places.

BY ROGER ANGELL



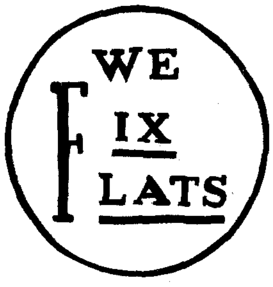
One spring Saturday when I was seven going on eight, my mother brought me with her on an automobile outing with her young lover and future husband, E. B. White. She took our family car, a slope-nosed Franklin sedan, and we must have met Andy by prearrangement at our garage. He did the driving. We left New York and went up into Westchester County for lunch—this was 1928 and it was still mostly country. On the way back, my mother, who had taken the wheel, stripped the gears while shifting, and we ground to a halt, halfway onto a shoulder of the Bronx River Parkway. Disaster. Andy thumbed a ride to go find a tow truck, and my mother, I now realize, was left to make this into an amusing story to tell my father and my older sister at dinner that evening. She almost never drove—thus the screeching and scraping sounds beneath us and the agonized look on her face when she got lost in mid-shift and we broke down. It was also unusual, an adventure, for me to be alone with her and her office friend Mr. White, as she'd described him. I think I wasn't meant to be there; maybe a Saturday date with a schoolmate had fallen through, and she'd had no recourse but to bring me along. But she never would have taken me off on an outing that would require me to lie about it to my father afterward, so the trip must have been presented beforehand as a chance for her to practice her driving, with the reliable Andy White as instructor. I had no idea, of course, that she and I were stranded in a predicament, but I recall sitting beside her on the running board of the ticking, cooling Franklin while we waited, with the pale new shrubs and pastoral grasses of the Parkway around us, and the occasional roadster or touring car (with its occupants swivelling their gaze toward us as they came by) swooshing past. Then a tow truck appeared around the curve behind us, with Andy White standing on the right-hand running board and waving excitedly. Yay, I'm back, we're rescued! My father would never have done that—found a tow so quickly or waved like a kid when he spotted us.

The story stops here. I don't remember that night or anything else about our little trip, but in less than two years my parents were divorced and my mother and Andy married and living on East Eighth Street. They soon had their own car, or cars: they kept changing. The Depression had arrived, but they were a successful *New Yorker* couple—she a fiction editor; he a writer of casuals and poetry and the first-page Comment section—and they loved driving around in an eight-year-old Pierce-Arrow touring car, with a high-bustle trunk, side mirrors, and flapping white roof. After their son was born—my brother Joel—they moved up to a staid seven-passenger Buick sedan. In the mid-thirties, Andy also acquired a secondhand beige-and-black 1928 Plymouth roadster—country wheels, used mostly around their place in Maine. The Buick still mattered to him. Back when it was new, thieves stole it out of a garage on University Place one night and used it in a daring bank stick-up in Yonkers. Andy was upset, but when he read an account of the crime in the newspapers the next day, with a passage that went "and the robbers' powerful getaway car swiftly outdistanced police pursuers," he changed sides. "C'mon, Buick!" he said. "Go!"

Every family has its own car stories, but in another sense we know them all in advance now, regardless of our age. The collective American unconscious is stuffed with old Pontiacs, and fresh reminders are never lacking. Weekend rallies flood the Mendocino or Montpelier back roads with high-roofed Model A's and Chevys, revarnished 1936 woodies, and thrumming, leaf-tone T-Birds; that same night, back home again or with our feet up at the Hyatt, we click onto TCM and find "The Grapes of Wrath," or "Bonnie and Clyde," or "Five Easy Pieces," or "Thelma & Louise," waiting to put us out on the narrow, anachronism-free macadam once again. (A friend of mine used to drive around the Village in his 1938 De Soto hearse, except when it was out on lease to still another "Godfather" movie.) Grandchildren, slipping 50 Cent or Eminem into their Discmans in the back seat, sigh and roll their eyes whenever the old highwayman starts up again. Yes, car travel was bumpier and curvier back then, with more traffic lights and billboards, more cows and hillside graveyards, no air-conditioning and almost no interstates, and with tin cans and Nehi signs and red Burma-Shave jingles crowding the narrow roadside. Give us a break.

Still, we drove, and what startles me from this great distance is how often and how far. I was a New York City kid who knew the subways and museums and movie theatres and zoos and ballparks by heart, but in the nineteen-thirties I also got out of town a lot, mostly by car. I drove (well, was driven) to Bear Mountain and Atlantic City and Gettysburg and Niagara Falls; went repeatedly to Boston and New Hampshire and Maine; drove to a Missouri cattle farm owned by an uncle; drove there during another summer and thence onward to Santa Fe and Tesuque and out to the Arizona Painted Desert. Then back again, to New York. Before this, in March, 1933—it was the week of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first inaugural—I'd boarded a Greyhound bus to Detroit, along with a Columbia student named Tex Goldschmidt, and we picked up a test-model Terraplane sedan at the factory (courtesy of an advertising friend of my father's who handled the Hudson-Essex account) and drove it back home. A couple of months later, in company with a math teacher named Mr. Burchell or Burkhill and four Lincoln School seventh-grade classmates, I crammed into a buckety old Buick sedan and drove to the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago; we came back by way of Niagara Falls, and, because I had been there before and knew the ropes, took time also to visit the Shredded Wheat factory, some tacky mummies, and a terrific fifty-cent roadside exhibition of dented and rusty, candy-wrapper-littered barrels and iron balls in which various over-the-brink daredevils had mostly met their end. With one exception, all of us in our party were still speaking.

If I now hop aboard some of these bygone trips for a mile or two, it is not for the sake of easy nostalgia—the fizz of warm Moxie up your nose; the Nabokovian names of roadside tourist cottages; the glint of shattered glass and sheen of blood around a tree-crumpled gray Reo; or the memory of collies and children, unaccustomed to auto-motion, throwing up beside their hastily parked family vehicles—but in search of some thread or path that links these outings and sometimes puts Canandaigua or Kirksville or Keams Canyon back in my head when I wake up in the middle of the night. Effort can now and then produce a sudden fragment of locality: the car stopped and me waking up with my sweating cheek against the gray plush of the back seat, as I stare at a mystifying message, "VEEDOL," painted on a square of white tin so bright in the sun that it makes me wince. Veedol? Beyond it, against the stucco gas-station wall, is a handmade sign, wavery in the gasoline fumes rising outside my window. Where are we? I want to sit up and ask my father, standing out there in his sneakers, khaki pants, and an old shirt with rolled-up sleeves, who is fishing his thick brown wallet—we're on a long haul to somewhere—out of a hip pocket, but I'm too dazed to speak.



The first day of that 1933 school trip to the Chicago World's Fair went on forever, and it was after dark when we topped a hillside in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, slowed at the vision of Pittsburgh alight in the distance, and felt a little lurch and jolt as the right rear wheel fell off the Buick. I can't remember dinner, but it was past midnight when, rewheeled, we pulled up at the McKeesport Y.M.C.A. and settled for two double rooms, plus cots. Jerry Tallmer, a surviving member of the party, tells me that a fellow-traveller, less suave than the rest of us, confessed to him later that until this moment he'd held a childhood notion that if you weren't in bed by midnight you died. Out in Chicago, we took in the House of Tomorrow and Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Car; ogled Sally Rand's "Streets of Paris"

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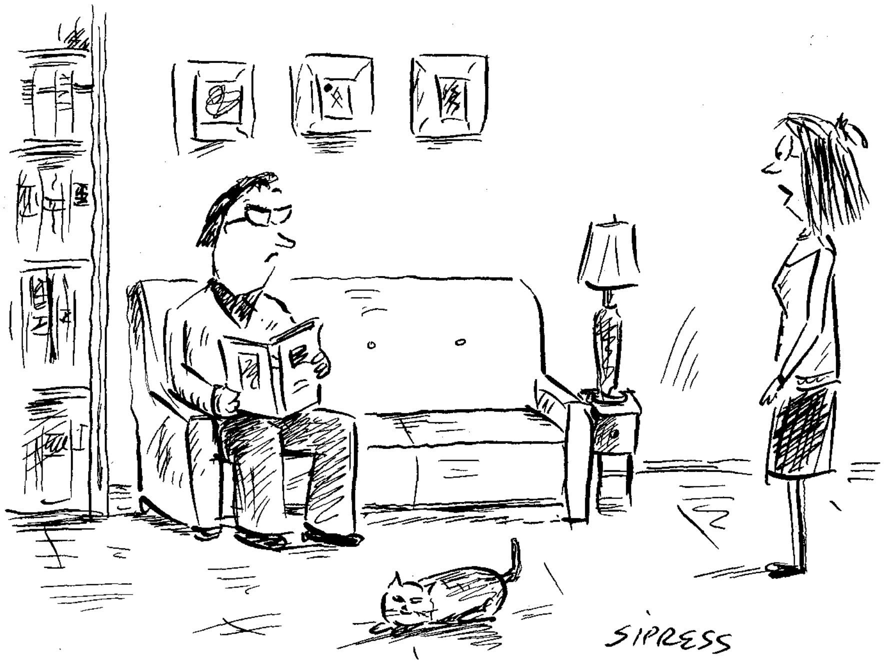
but didn't attend; went to the Museum of Natural History; laughed at Chicago's dinky elevated cars; and in our little notebooks wrote down that Depression soup-kitchen lines in Chicago looked exactly like the ones in depressed New York. We were smart and serious, and would be expected to report on this trip in Social Studies, come fall. The Century of Progress, we concluded, was mostly about *advertising*. One afternoon, the temperature went down twenty-nine degrees in an hour and a half as a black storm blew in from over Lake Michigan; the next morning we read that the sightseeing plane whose ticket window we'd seen at the Fair had crashed, killing all aboard. Three days later, wheeling south from Niagara Falls, my companions (including the heroic Burkhill or Burchell, who did all the driving) offered to pay me two dollars apiece if I'd just *shut up* for a change, and not speak another word for the rest of the trip. Unaffronted and short of cash, I agreed, and collected my princely ten bucks while we were passing under the new George Washington Bridge, just about home.

YOUR DIRE PREDICTION IN THIS SPACE 1-555-826-1000

Breakdowns happened all the time. A year earlier, headed for Missouri with my pal Tex Goldschmidt, our car, another family Franklin, quit cold on a hillside in Liberty, New York. Towed to a garage, we learned that the replacement part we needed would arrive by mail in two days. We put up in an adjacent boarding house, where the large brown cookies permanently in place in the center of the dining-room table were just possibly varnished. Sitting on porch rockers that evening, with our feet up on the railing, we were terrified by a Catskill lightning bolt that flew along a grounding wire from the rooftop rod and down a viny column a yard or two from our toes. We sat on, listening to the thrash of night trees and the gurgle of water through the gutter downspouts, when—*bam!*—it happened again: an explosion and a blaze of white down the same path, and the smell of immeasurable voltage in the air around us. "Well, so much for *that* adage," Tex said, rising. "I'm going to bed."

Arthur Goldschmidt, whom I've written about before, came from San Antonio, and was knowledgeable about cars and roadside stuff. He'd been hired by my father, with whom I lived on weekdays, to come down from Columbia a couple of afternoons a week and spend some time with me when I got home from school, but he was so smart and engaging that he became a fixture. Here, a few months later, he'd been given the family car and the family wiseguy to take out West; my father would come along by train a little later, while Tex continued south to see his folks. Driving, Tex smoked Chesterfields and talked about the Scottsboro boys, asked if I thought Babe Ruth wore a girdle, and wondered how much I knew about the corrupt but colorful governor of Texas, Ma Ferguson. We had no radio but stayed alert anyway. Tex was the one to spot the first buzzard aloft and the rare passing North Dakota license plate, and to pick up on roadside or billboard names. ("Sweet Orr Pants," he said, musingly. "Coward Shoes?") He challenged me to recite all the Burma-Shave jingles we'd encountered ("The bearded lady / tried a jar / she's now / a famous movie star / Burma-Shave"; "Rip a fender / off your car / mail it in for / a half-pound jar / Burma-Shave") and make up some of our own. He made me rate the girls in my class for looks and then for character, and said, "If our left front tire is six feet around, how many revolutions will it make by the time we reach Cleveland?" Late in our trip, wheeling down an unpopulated gravel highway west of Edina, Missouri, Tex slowed as we came up to three black sedans, oddly parked crossways on the road at a little distance from each other. As we passed the first one, to our left, the second moved forward from the right to block our path, but Tex spun us hard right, spewing gravel, passed behind him, and floored it up the road and away. Prohibition revenue inspectors, he thought, or maybe a highway stickup. Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were around here somewhere, making do in hard times.



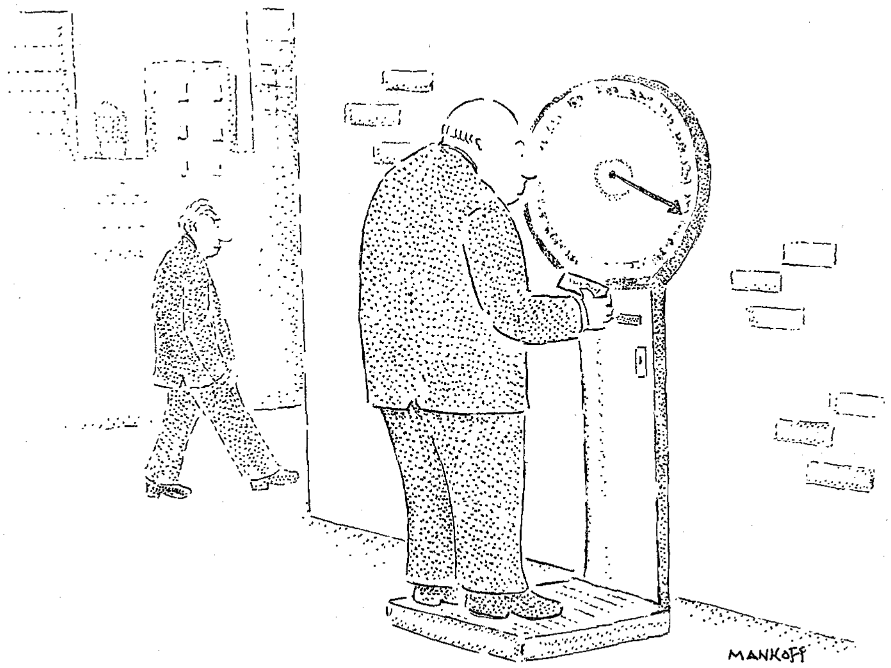
"I was thinking about what we should do this weekend, and I have a few ideas for you to reject."

• •

I keep forgetting how hot it was, driving. Two summers along, in late August of 1934, my father replanned the second part of our trip by leaving my uncle's place in Green Castle, Missouri (the same haven Tex and I had been heading for), around noon and driving non-stop to Santa Fe. We'd do Kansas by night and stay cool. Our party—Father, my eighteen-year-old sister Nancy, her Concord Academy classmate Barbara Kidder (the two had just graduated), and I—were experienced car people by now. We hated motels, carried water in our two big thermoses (later, in New Mexico, we bought a waterskin and slung it on a front fender), and favored gas stations with the old-style pumps that were cranked by hand like an ice-cream freezer while you watched your Sunoco or Gulf slosh into a glass ten-gallon container up on top, then empty into your tank. We knew how to open a Coke by sticking a silver dollar under the cap and banging the bottle with your fist, and we'd learned to stop wincing or weaving when another languid or headlight-entranced rabbit in the road—*ba-bump*—went to the great cabbage patch in the sky. The floor in the back of the car filled up with crumpled sections of the Kansas City *Star* or the St. Joseph *News-Press* that we'd picked up at the last diner.

Nancy was driving by now, and could spell my father for two-hour stretches. She was a better driver than he was. Her hair was tied up with a string of red yarn, keeping it off her ears; at the wheel, she'd fire up a cigarette with the dashboard lighter, then hold it in the air in her long fingers, a ring of scarlet lipstick around the nearer end. Too classy for Bryn Mawr, I thought. I liked Barbara Kidder, who wore a blue neck bandanna and shorts, and had a nice store of rattlesnake and Gila-monster stories; her parents were archeologists—she was joining them later at a dig in Nevada. My father overcorrected while driving and favored long silences, but he was a soldier, a *commandante*, at the wheel, good for a five-hour bore through the blazing Indiana afternoon while we dozed and told dumb jokes. He didn't go for jokes, but laughed out loud when we imitated him trying to order his breakfast café au lait from a waitress at our creaky small-hotel dining room. This always started our day. "I want a glass of milk," he began, speaking loudly and fashioning the shape of a glass in the air. "*Cold* milk, in a glass. Then, and in addition, I'd like a cup of coffee"—his hands moved to one side, forming an invisible cup with a saucer underneath—"and with it a pitcher of *hot* milk, to put into the coffee. Now, again: cold milk, please, in a glass"—he poured it and pushed it carefully to the side—"coffee, hot coffee"—he made a happy sniffing sound, at the Maxwell Houseness of it—"and over here our hot milk"—little finger waves to show heat rising—"to put into the hot coffee. Is that clear?" But of course it wasn't. The waitress, bewildered by this mixture of mime and command and terrified by the lawyerly glare in his dark eyes, had long since paused with her pencil. What Father got was generally coffee with cold milk in the pitcher, or coffee and boiling water, or, at least once, iced coffee. It never came out right. We shook our heads helplessly, knowing that he wasn't cruel or unfeeling: he just liked things nice.

That night, in Kansas, Father held to course, upright at the wheel through the eight- or ten-mile straightaways, with the bright headlights forming—for me, in back—an outlined silhouette of his ears and bald head and strong forearms. I would fall asleep, and when I woke again it would be Nancy driving and smoking, with Father asleep on the right-hand seat and Barbara asleep beside me in back. The night air rushed in about us through the tilted wind portals at the front of the front windows and the smaller



"Get off me, lard-ass."

• •

ones in back (we were in the zippy Terraplane that Tex and I had brought from Detroit), and with it the hot, flat scent of tall corn; a sudden tang of skunk come and gone; the smell of tar when the dirt roads stopped, fainter now with the hot sun gone; and, over a rare pond or creek as the tire noise went deeper, something rich and dank, with cowflop and dead fish mixing with the sweet-water weeds. I had a Texaco road map with me in back, and when we came through a little town or stopped at a ringing railroad crossing I got out my flashlight and tried to follow the thin blue line of our passage: Chapman and WaKeeney, Winona, and now—we must have turned south a bit—Sharon Springs. I fell asleep again. Sometime in the night, my hand found Barbara's hand and held on. When I awoke with the first sun behind us, we'd climbed out of heat, and the field dirt around us had a redder hue. "Colorado," Father said softly. I lay back in my nest and Barbara's hand came out from under her thin Mexican blanket and took mine once again. That morning, we went through La Junta and Trinidad and over the Raton Pass into New Mexico. (We'd stopped earlier at a lookout where four different states were visible, surely, in the haze to the east and south.) The Sangre de Cristos came into view and the first soft-cornered adobe houses, and that night we ate at La Fonda with my Aunt Elsie, who worked for the Indian Bureau, and had Hopi snake dances and San Ildefonso pottery-makers and Mabel Dodge Luhan in store for us in the coming weeks. Almost the best part was still ahead.

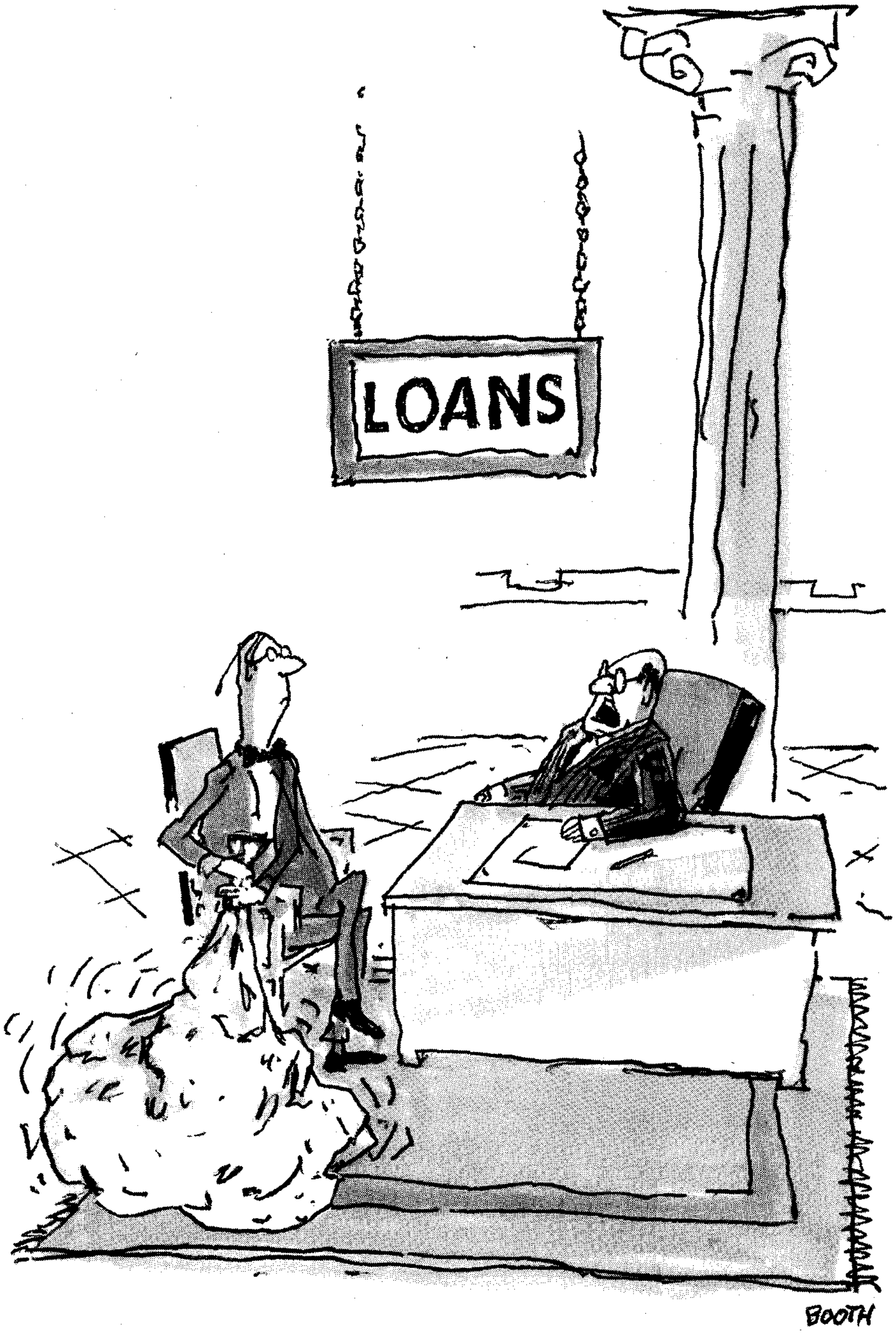
I learned how to drive early, and in June of 1936 sent five dollars to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles in Augusta, Maine, along with a note saying, "I am fifteen. Please send my license in enclosed envelope." That was all it took. I appropriated the Whites' yellowy old Plymouth roadster, with its splayed fenders, wooden-spoke wheels, cracked leather front seat, and leaky ragtop roof. (I carried a thick roll of Johnson & Johnson adhesive tape under the seat, for rainy day patch-ups.) There was a little hole in the floorboards, near the brake pedal, and if you glanced down there on a daytime errand you could see the grainy macadam streaming by under your foot. Soon I was taking girls to the movies on Tuesday or Saturday nights, upstairs at the Town Hall in Blue Hill, or to the Grand, in Ellsworth. I kept my headlights on low beam on foggy nights, suavely navigating through sudden thick blankets of damp, and found quiet places to park in East Blue Hill or out on Naskeag Point. I had become Andy Hardy. Making out in parked cars puts me into the movies or into a thousand cartoons, but what memory presents about these chilly long-gone summer evenings is the first five minutes under way, with my hands at ease on the nubbly wheel, and with the white highway ahead and the gleam from the looped roadside power wires giving back tanned knees, a sweet nose and strong chin, just there to my right. Intimacy.

Late on a Sunday afternoon in February, 1938, somebody called up the stairs of my boarding-school dormitory, "Angell, there are three women from Smith down here to see you." We were in the hilly northeast corner of Connecticut, far into the dreary winter-term stretches of my senior year, with spring vacation still six weeks away. A gag of some sort. Muttering, I came down and found Cynthia Coggin's blue Ford phaeton waiting by the door, and her tickled smile behind the snap-on winter side window—a friend from Maine, with crinkly blond hair and her own low, late-model white-wall speedster, the snazziest wheels I knew. She was about my age, but a year and a light-year ahead. Now, with two classmates for company, she'd driven seventy or eighty miles from Northampton on impulse, to press a surprise Sunday call. I rushed upstairs for a coat and permission, and in another minute was turning around from the cozy front seat to meet the new ladies in back as we sped away, delightfully in motion. I only had an hour—time enough for tea and cake at an inn in the next village, it turned out—and they got me back barely before compulsory evening Vespers. Walking into the chapel, I knew that every eye was on me and that my school clout had just taken a gigantic upward leap. I didn't have to tell anybody that Cynthia was a friend, not a girlfriend, or that the difference didn't matter to me. All I could think about was the ride and the compliment.

Driving nowadays is nothing like it was. Mostly, it's a time of day: where we are before the mall, or around nine and six and—thank you, God—not later. On longer reaches, noise and wind rustle have been abolished, traffic-free stretches appear only late at night or in the moments after a red light has swept the road clean, and horsepower provides an airliner sort of lift that does away with inertia and topography. We move in ceaseless company, each of us wrapped in an expensive and imperturbable anonymity. Only now and then, easing at seventy-six m.p.h. past the Audi going seventy-two, do we throw a glance at our neighbors three feet to the right and are startled—it nearly makes you jump—by pure genre: two or three young men gesturing and laughing at something in there, or an older woman holding up her book and reading out loud to her driver husband. Driving, for all its drags and trouble, puts us together—I'm amazed that its immense advertising never quite gets this right—and on some trips delivers a complicated fresh sense of ourselves. I think that pause with my mother on the Bronx River Parkway first stuck in my memory as an adventure but later on because she and I almost never had something happen just to the two of us. And if she thought back to that outing it could have been to see Andy White—perhaps they were not quite lovers yet—finding a boyish and confident joy in the unexpected. My Lincoln School classmates didn't hate me for my non-stop blather in our crowded Buick; they craved a little quiet, and bet that perhaps I'd enjoy it, too, given a chance. It was a long shot, but maybe I'd find, along about Poughkeepsie, that I didn't have to be on all the time to stay alive. Tex Goldschmidt never looked at his watch in the day and a half we hung out together in Liberty, New York, waiting for that distributor part, while my father would have seen the mishap as a test of some kind, and gone all stern and strong in response. But Father trusted Tex because he'd seen that he really believed in jokes; there was something easy and silly there that he longed for. I don't know what Barbara Kidder made of our holding hands like that. She was almost a woman that night and I still almost a boy, and I can't say why I'm so sure she never mentioned it to anyone.

There's a famous story by John Updike called "The Happiest I've Been," which ends in a long car trip. In it, the narrator, John, a college sophomore, is driving back to Chicago after a Christmas visit home in the middle of Pennsylvania. The trip back is a seventeen-hour haul and he shares a car with a friend named Neil (it's his father's car). Before heading west, they stop at a drunken party, and late that night John holds a girl in his arms on a sofa, mostly because they're both so cold. He kisses her a little and she falls asleep. Dawn is coming when the trip begins at last (the girls are gone), and Neil unexpectedly lets John drive the car. Then Neil falls asleep, too. As I read this story for the first time, in 1959, when it came out in *The New Yorker*, my mind went back, as if on radar, to Barbara Kidder.

"When we came into tunnel country"—the last passage goes—"the flicker and hollow amplification stirred Neil awake. He sat up, the mackinaw dropping to his lap, and lit a cigarette. A second after the scratch of his match the moment occurred of which each following moment was a slight diminution, as we made the long irregular descent toward Pittsburgh. There were many reasons for my feeling so happy. We were on our way. I had seen a dawn. This far, Neil could appreciate, I had brought us safely. Ahead, a girl waited who, if I asked, would marry me, but first there was a long trip; many hours and towns interceded between me and that encounter. . . . And there was knowing that twice since midnight a person had trusted me enough to fall asleep beside me." ♦



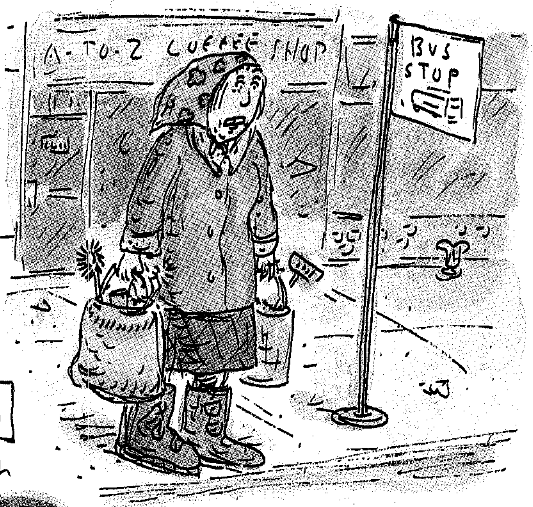
"What have you other than your bag of parrots?"

MY SPAM SKETCHBOOK;

Every time I check my e-mail, I get Spam from certain people. At first, their names sounded fairly believable. A "Mirella Borth" wanted to give me debt-consolidation tips. An "Alexander Clinebells" wondered if I would like a bigger penis, or maybe it was larger breasts. After a while, these names began to sound strange. They didn't sound at all like any names I'd ever heard before. They didn't sound like they came from any country on earth. Perhaps they came from Planet Spam...

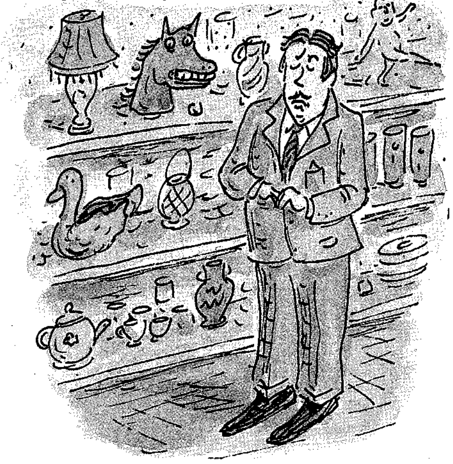
Elba Rudd

Cleans office buildings in midtown.



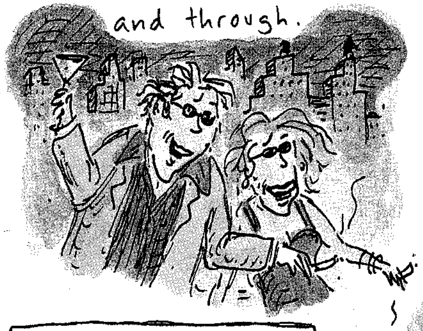
Brasil ("rhymes with basil") Hinchcliff

Very snooty. Sells antiques.



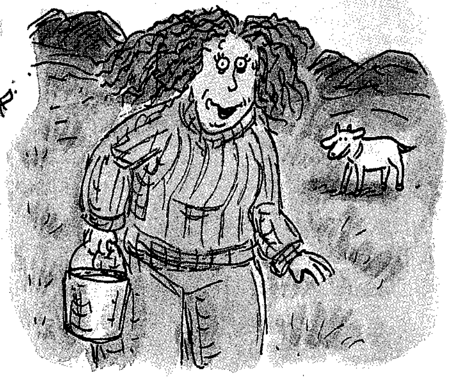
Lacomb Ciliberto

Eurotrash, through and through.



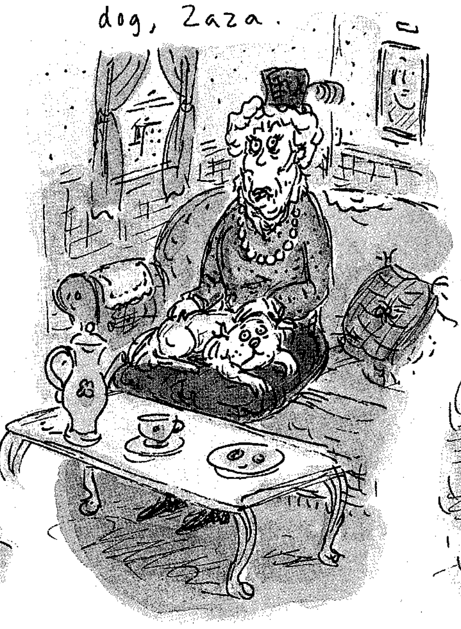
Biby Mulberry

Makes her own goat cheese in Vermont.



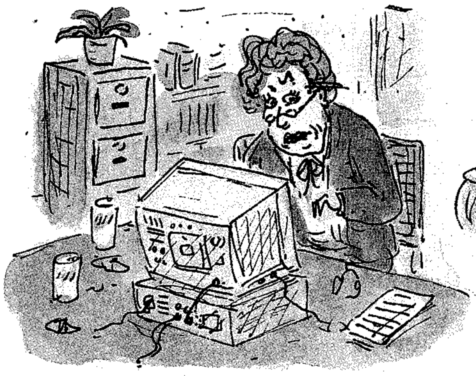
Feodora Campeau

Lives in an apartment at Park and 61st with her dog, Zaza.



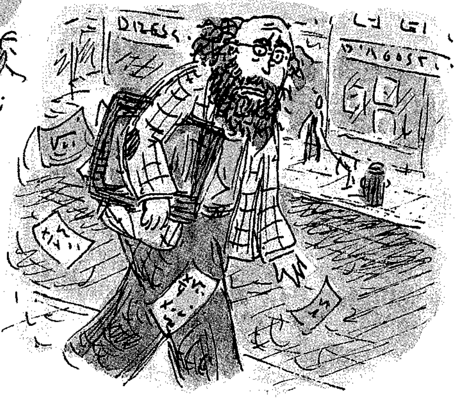
Carmen Glavin

Has been the bookkeeper for A-to-Z Imports, Inc., for nigh on forty years.

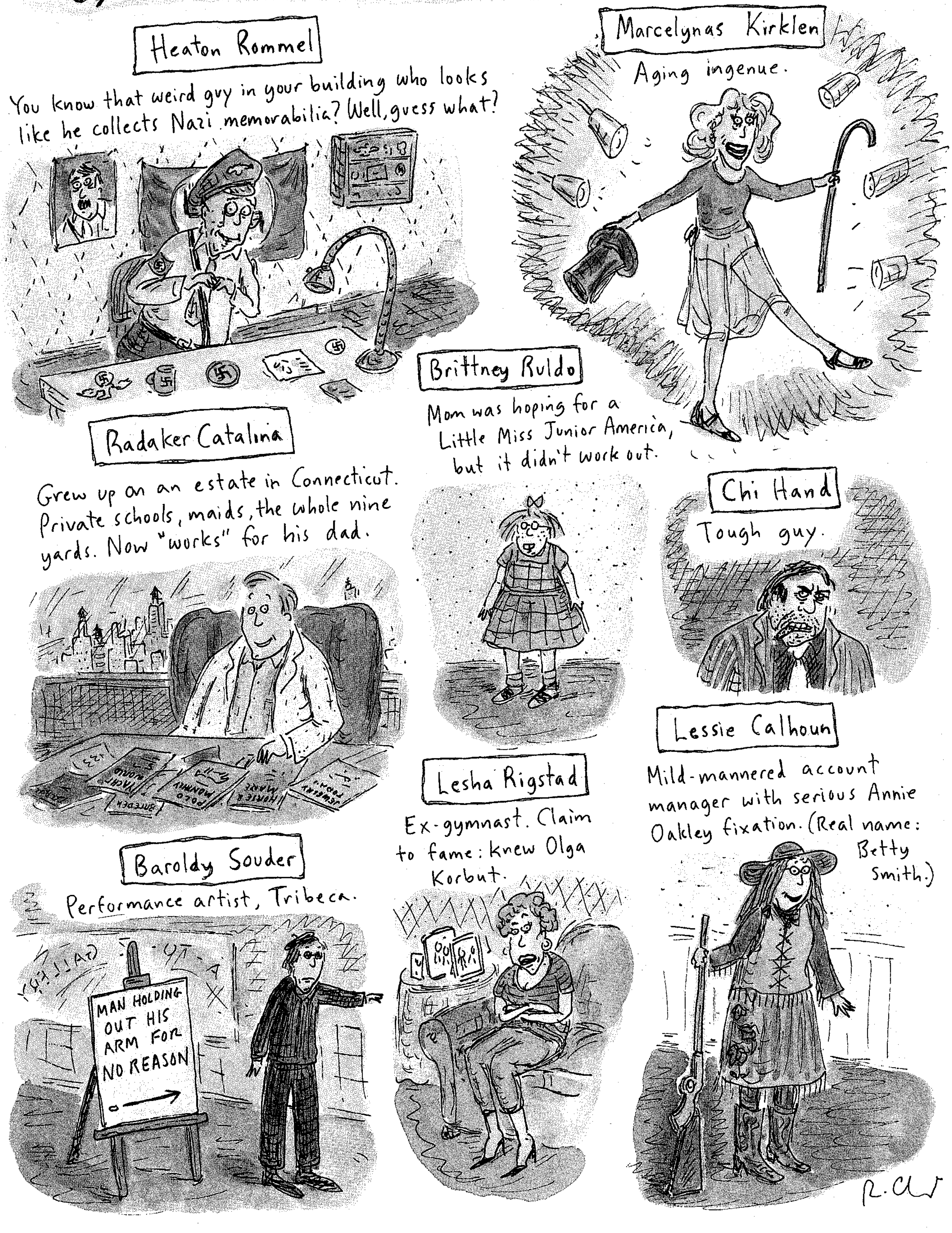


Ludwig Bialkenius

Math genius. Still working on dissertation at Columbia.



or, WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?


MAN HOLDING OUT HIS ARM FOR NO REASON

Heaton Rommel

You know that weird guy in your building who looks like he collects Nazi memorabilia? Well, guess what?

Marcelynas Kirklen

Aging ingenue.

Brittney Ruldo

Mom was hoping for a Little Miss Junior America, but it didn't work out.

Radaker Catalina

Grew up on an estate in Connecticut. Private schools, maids, the whole nine yards. Now "works" for his dad.

Chi Hand

Tough guy.

Lessie Calhoun

Mild-mannered account manager with serious Annie Oakley fixation. (Real name: Betty Smith.)

Lesha Rigstad

Ex-gymnast. Claim to fame: knew Olga Korbut.

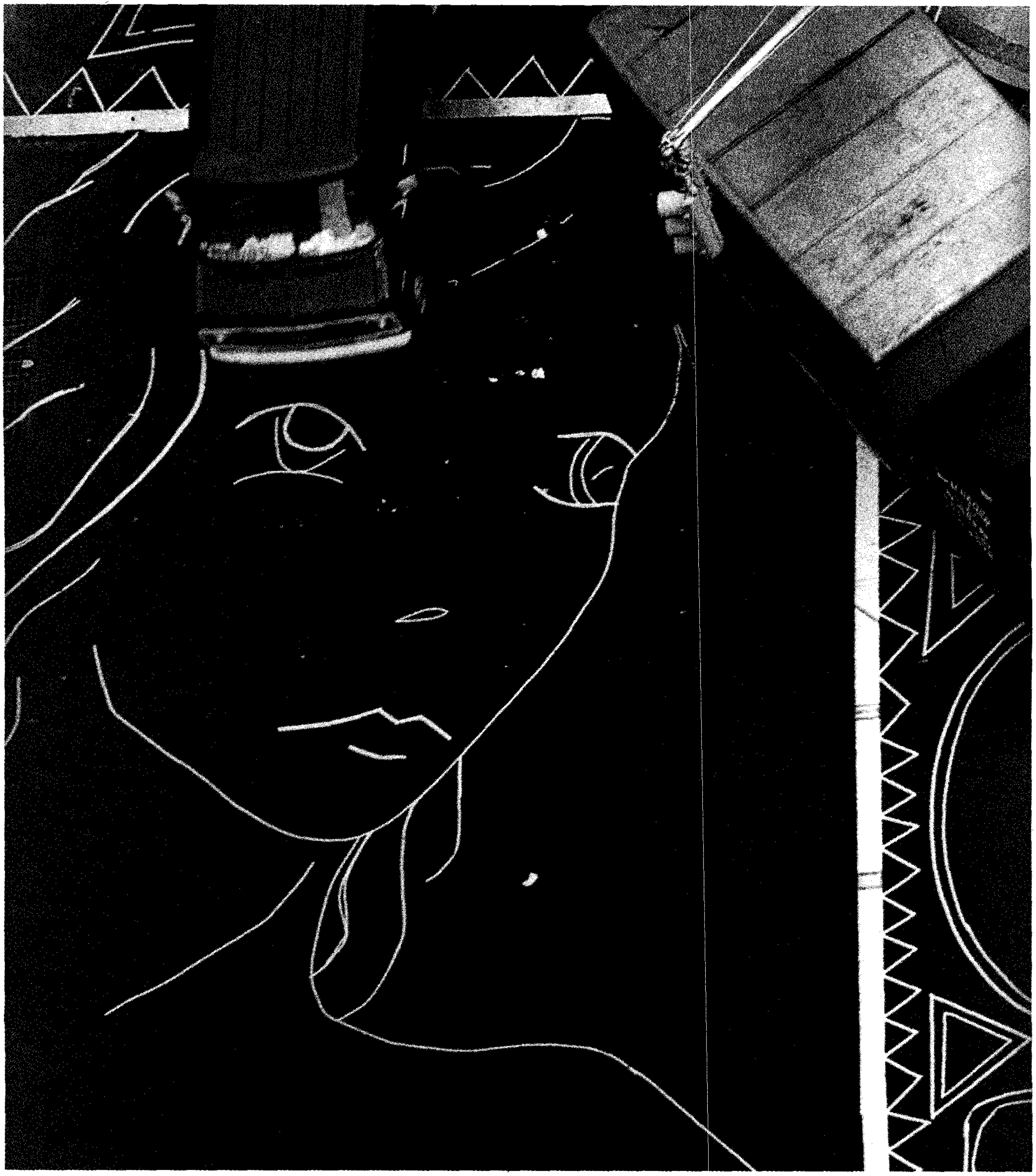
Baroldy Souder

Performance artist, Tribeca.

FICTION

CRYPTOLOGY

BY LEONARD MICHAELS



Nachman had arrived in New York the previous evening, and was walking along Fifth Avenue when she came up behind him, calling, "Nachman, Nachman, is that you?" He looked back and saw a woman shining with a happiness for which he, apparently, was responsible. His mere existence had turned on her lights. Nachman kissed her on both cheeks, and then they stood chatting at the corner of Forty-second Street, the millions passing with the minutes. When Nachman parted from her, he was holding her business card and the key to her apartment in Chelsea, having promised to join her and her husband for dinner that evening.

"If you arrive before us, just wait in the apartment," she said. "It's been so many years, Nachman. I'm Helen Ferris now. Do you know my husband, Benjamin Strong Ferris? He's a lawyer. Also a name in computer science and cryptology. I assume you're in New York for the cryptology conference. Benjamin goes there to find geniuses like you for his company."

"As a matter of fact," Nachman said, but she was still talking.

"It would be wonderful if we could have a drink, just you and me, and remember the old days, but I have to run. There'll be time to talk later. I can't tell you how glad I am that we ran into each other. Actually, Nachman, I followed you for about five blocks. I couldn't believe it was you. Benjamin will be so delighted. He's heard me talk about you so often. Should I cook, or should we have dinner out? Oh, let's decide later."

When she stopped talking, Nachman said that he didn't know the name Benjamin Strong Ferris, and he didn't consider himself a genius. "I'm a good mathematician," he added. "Good is rare enough, believe me." Helen Ferris smiled with affectionate understanding, as if his modesty amused her, but there was also something more. She seemed to believe that a special bond existed between her and Nachman. To disguise his ignorance—what special bond *was* there between them?—Nachman became expansive, even somewhat confessional. He told Helen Ferris that he was indeed in New York for the cryptology conference; he'd been invited to a job interview by a representative of the Delphic Corporation. But whoever had invited him hadn't given his name.

Helen Ferris obviously took great pleasure in listening to Nachman, and yet he saw a blankness in her rapt, almost delirious focus, as if she were not listening so much as appreciating. Her eyes devoured his, and her smile, which had a mischievous quality, also suggested a rictus in its unrelieved tension and shape. This intensity, and her alarming red lipstick, made Nachman think that she wanted to eat him. He wondered if a smile was an evolutionary phenomenon, carried in the genes, a reflexive anticipation of a meal—not necessarily made of people, but who knows what the ancestral diet was? Nachman smiled in response to Helen Ferris's smile, but he felt no desire to eat her.

"So the person who invited you didn't give his name?" she prompted.

"The letter was signed by a secretary. Abigail M. Stokes. She just gave me the name of the hotel and a date and time for the interview. To tell the truth, I didn't really come to New York because of the interview—I wanted to visit my father, who lives in Brooklyn. I haven't seen him in years. And, since Delphic was paying for my ticket and hotel room, why not? The interview was set for one o'clock this afternoon, and I figured they were taking me to lunch, but nobody was there to meet me. No one at the hotel desk had heard of the Delphic Corporation, and my room had been paid for by an individual whose name they weren't free to disclose. So since then I've been walking around feeling a little . . . I don't know what. Weirdly disappointed."

"It is certainly weird," Helen Ferris said. "But why disappointed? You got a free trip to New York. How clever of you! You're sure there was no other name at the bottom of the letter?" she asked. "You know what I mean—it didn't say something like 'Abigail M. Stokes for Joe Schmo'?"

Nachman wondered fleetingly if Helen Ferris thought he was an idiot.

"No Joe Schmo. Somebody anonymous wanted to interview me for a job. I have a job. I'm not looking for another one. But I agreed to come. Why not? I figured I might even learn about cryptology, an exciting field. A good mathematician could make a lot of money fooling with codes. Mind you, I said good. I didn't say genius."

"Would you have considered taking the job?"

"Not seriously, though it would be fun to be a millionaire. I fancied myself buying things like a dishwasher, but I don't work for money. You know what I mean. My salary pays my bills. I work like most people, not to waste my life. Have you been to Santa Monica? That's where I live. On the beach you see people with nice bodies and no jobs. Also no brains. Life is too short to waste a minute getting a sunburn. I've never even taken a vacation. I don't know why anybody would want to. Anyhow, as I said, I wanted to visit my father. This was an opportunity. Expenses paid by the Delphic mystery man."

"You don't own a dishwasher?" Helen Ferris asked, giggling. "I bet I know what happened. Delphic decided to hire somebody else before you arrived, and then they forgot all about you and went home."

"But they paid for my ticket and hotel room."

"They'll write it off. The cost of doing business. You feel disappointed, but it isn't the least bit personal. You mean nothing to them."

"I'm meaningless?"

"Not to me," Helen Ferris said. Was she teasing him? Or was she right? To the Delphic people Nachman probably was meaningless.

"I've got to go," she said. "I'm so excited. We'll have fun tonight."

As she walked away, Nachman wondered how long it had been since he last saw Helen Ferris. He also wondered, Who, exactly, was Helen Ferris?

She remembered him so well. She had called out his name in the street. How could he say, "Who are you?" Another man might have been able to say it. Not Nachman. In a few hours, she would expect him to show up and meet her husband. The prospect of joining strangers for dinner had something adventurous about it, even devilish and appropriate to New York. Nachman didn't know anyone in the city who was as friendly as his old friend Helen Ferris, whoever she was. He was simply unable to remember her. Her wide cheekbones and dark, roundish face, with its maternally sexy brown eyes, looked Semitic, maybe a little Asian, but she might just as easily be Mexican or Puerto Rican. He'd known women who looked like her, but remembered none named Helen. She was quite attractive, though a little scary. You'd think he'd remember her for that reason. Had she no-

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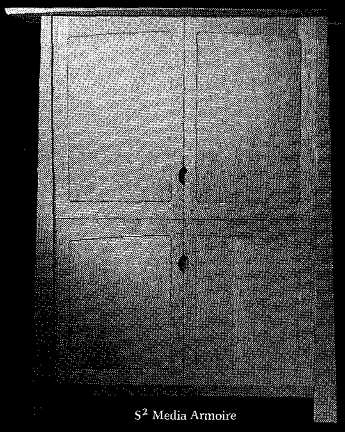

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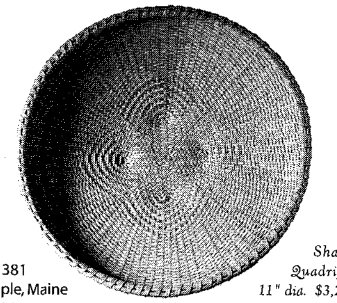

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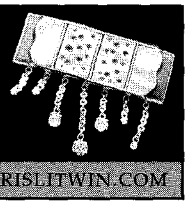

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ticed his confusion? People can tell if you recognize them or not. They see it in your eyes, hear it in your voice. Oh, well. Nachman would get the question out of the way when he saw her again. It would be more embarrassing later than it would have been a few minutes ago, but he wouldn't let the evening pass without confessing. The key to Helen Ferris's apartment was in his pants pocket. Her card was in his wallet. Dinner was still a few hours away.

Nachman continued walking aimlessly, trying to remember. How do you try to remember? You make yourself passive, receptive, available. If it comes, it comes. A strange kind of trying. He wondered if there had been a clue to her identity in what she'd said. Unfortunately, Nachman had done most of the talking. The look in Helen Ferris's eyes and her red smile came to him; nothing else. She refused to step out of the shadows of his mind.

The late-October weather felt summery, but, as the afternoon wore on, Nachman detected a quality in the breeze that was too poignant for summer, had too fine an edge. Another year was nearly over. Nachman liked the poignancy, could almost see it in the changing light. The sun would soon be lower in the sky. Darkness and cold would invade the streets and challenge people's energy, give steel to their thoughts. Nachman felt as if he were walking heroically into the heart of the drama, the adventure of the city, and not just because of the season. Helen Ferris was part of New York's endemic adventurousness. The crowds, the traffic, the buildings, the changing weather, the city's infinite complexity, its unknowability—who could comprehend it? Nachman felt exhilarated. From a certain point of view, there was even an adventure in being stood up at the cryptology conference. Invited, all expenses paid, to come three thousand miles only to find nobody who gives a damn whether you came or not. No explanation, no apology. Not even a note at the hotel desk. This couldn't have happened in hick towns like London, Paris, Rome, Berlin, and Tokyo. That was what made New York great. Nobody gave a shit about anybody.

The truth was that Nachman was enraged. He had smiled as he talked to Helen Ferris. He hadn't let her see his anger. She might have thought that he was angry at her.

Nachman chuckled to himself and shook his head ruefully, as if he required a moment of private ironic theatre. His mood became philosophical. After all, he was morally compromised. He'd agreed to the interview in bad faith. He'd had no intention of changing jobs, and had wanted only to visit his father. In fact, he had planned to go directly from the airport to his father's apartment, but when he phoned—once from the plane, then again from the airport—nobody had answered. His father was old and forgetful. He might have gone out. He might even have gone to visit relatives in Connecticut. So Nachman had taken a cab to the hotel. He'd visit his father tomorrow, if the old guy answered the goddam phone. If not, he'd fly back to California, feeling that he'd wasted his time.

As for the sense of adventure, the weather and all that, he saw now that it had been a fantasy, a kind of lie. Nachman had simply been trying to give value to this trip. He could kid himself only so long before self-contempt made him see things as they were. Only a fool would accept an invitation to meet somebody who had no name. Nachman was a fool. That was now an established fact. Good. He felt much better.

A few hours later, Nachman entered a building in Chelsea. The doorman, who had been given Nachman's name, said, "Go right up. Apartment 14-B." The elevator was brightened by three half-mirrored walls. Nachman could see himself from head to waist in triplicate. These three half Nachmans made him feel less, rather than more, visible. The reflections seemed mental rather than physical, but he was suddenly claustrophobic, as if the elevator were overcrowded. Below the mirrors, there was a walnut-stained surface embossed with carved flowers. A brass strip marked the place where the wood met the gray industrial-carpeted floor. Nachman studied the light fixture directly above his head. A fat bulb glowed through a bowl of cloudy glass that was subtly textured. The elevator spoke for the building, Nachman thought—a confusion of materials suggesting luxurious waste. It carried him slowly to the fourteenth floor, then stopped with a jerk.

Nachman about Helen Ferris had

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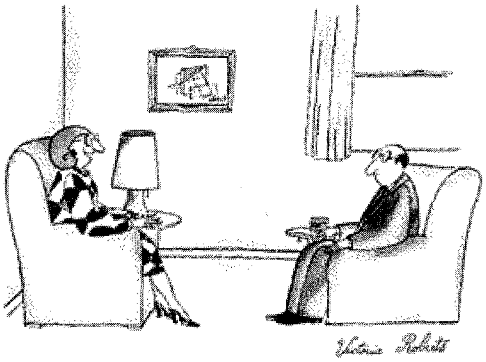

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come to Nachman. He supposed that he must have known her when he was a graduate student at U.C.L.A. He'd had quite a few acquaintances then, men and women with whom he'd since lost touch. There had been parties where he'd fallen into intense and transitory intimacy with people to whom he'd only nodded as they passed on campus later, avoiding eye contact. Wait a minute. Hadn't he once left a party with a dark girl who had been too drunk to drive? Hadn't he driven her in her Jaguar to her parents' house in Beverly Hills? Hadn't they . . . what? The elevator doors opened. No, that girl's name was Dolores. She looked nothing like Helen Ferris.

There were four apartment doors, two on either side of the hall, which was carpeted in the same way as the elevator, and was stunningly silent. Dim lights, set in elaborate brass sconces, trailed along the walls. Nachman found the door to 14-B. He looked at a brass-rimmed eyehole as he pressed the black, nipplelike bell. He heard a muffled gong inside the apartment. He waited. Nobody answered. He pressed the bell again and waited. Nobody answered. The key worked. The door opened into a large room.

"Hello," Nachman said, careful not to shriek. "Anybody home?" No one responded. He stepped inside, shut the door, and realized that he wasn't alone. An odor of perfumed soap lay on the air, which was faintly moist and warm. He heard water running and glanced at what he guessed was a bathroom door. It was partly open. Someone was taking a shower and had heard nothing because of the noise of the water. Nachman was reluctant to shout. People taking a shower feel defenseless and are easily frightened.

Nachman stood in the large room. It was maybe forty by twenty feet, with a gleaming maple floor. A bar counter separated the kitchen area from the rest of the room. Furniture was clustered in the middle, floating in space. A glass-topped coffee table was set lengthwise between two red sofas, with black chairs at either end. Nachman noticed a roll-top desk against a wall, and a library table holding stacks of papers. The room had tall windows that looked across the avenue toward the windows of other buildings. Near the farthest wall there was a dresser and a bed with night tables and reading lamps. To the right of the bed, a spiral staircase led to an opening in the ceiling, apparently the second floor of the apartment. A suitcase was on the bed. It sat in the middle of a bulky white comforter that had been flung back, revealing silky cobalt-blue sheets. At the foot of the bed was a large television on a wheeled aluminum stand that held magazines on a shelf above the wheels. In the ceiling there were two rows of track lights.

Who was in the shower? Helen or Benjamin Ferris? In answer to his question, Nachman heard voices. They were amplified in the largely hollow space of the room, as if in the barrel of a drum. The man's voice was emotionally neutral. The woman's voice was strained, higher-pitched. It was Helen Ferris. "I'm not finished. Why don't you get out and let me finish?" They were showering together, Nachman realized.

"I don't want to have to talk to him alone."

"Oh, for Christ's sake. You can talk to him until I come out. Fix him a drink. Turn on the TV and watch the ballgame. Men like sports. You won't even have to talk to him. Be nice for once in your fucking life."

"Hey, hey, hey. *I'm* supposed to be nice? Like *I* invited the schmuck to the apartment? I'll pick up the check at dinner, baby, but that's where it ends. This is your affair."

"Don't start with the affair business. He's not my type."

"You have types?"

"I'm always nice to your friends, Benjamin, even when they bore me to death."

"Friend? You said he didn't even recognize you."

"So what? He's drifty. Not your average New York cocksmith, like some persons I could name. I'll remind him who I am at dinner."

"I'll be sitting there, for Christ's sake. He'll die."

"He won't know I told you anything. Besides, he probably doesn't remember that, either. He's practically certifiable. I think his fly was unzipped."

"Don't make me jealous."

Helen Ferris laughed.

Benjamin Ferris went on, "What's the guy's name? Nachman?"

"What's wrong with Nachman?"

"I didn't say there was anything wrong with it."

"It's your tone. You think Ferris is so beautiful? People are always saying, 'Like the Ferris wheel?' It embarrasses me."

Nachman walked past the bathroom, crossing the thirty feet or so to the television set. He put the key on top of the TV. He'd heard enough. He was leaving. As he drew his hand away, the key fell to the floor. It had stuck to his fingertips, which were slightly damp. So were his palms. He was perspiring. The key made a sharp clink when it hit the floor. Nachman bent quickly to retrieve it, as if to undo the noise. If they had heard the key fall, they knew he was in the apartment. He couldn't leave. He would have to confront them. No. He would shout hello and pretend that he'd just arrived. They would pretend that they didn't know he'd heard them talking about him. Every word the three of them said would be a lie. He put the key back on the television, and it remained there as he drew his hand away.

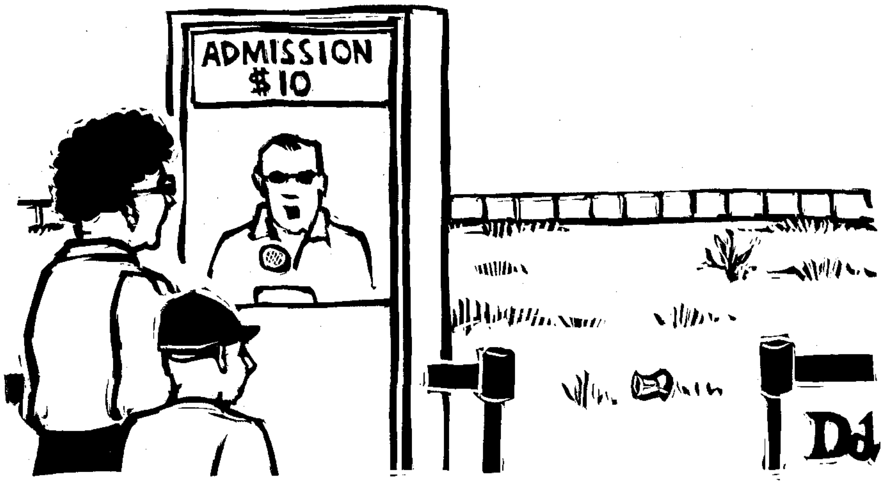
He'd never before overheard people talking about him. It was unnerving. He'd been radically objectified, like an insensate rock, while his soul floated in the air. A general hurt spread within his chest and began to seep like a poison through his body. He couldn't think clearly. It was hard to breathe. Again Nachman felt an impulse to leave, but he couldn't simply walk back to the door. If they heard the door shut behind him, they'd feel terrible, knowing Nachman had heard them. Why should he care? Nachman cared.

The open suitcase on the bed was large and old-fashioned, made of yellow leather like a beautiful Gladstone, with straps and metal corners. What he saw in the suitcase told him that Helen and Benjamin were packing for a trip. How nice. They did things together—travelled, showered, bickered, and said vile things about people who had never done them any harm. Their conjugal solidarity was daunting.

If only Nachman had stayed in California, he'd have gone to work in his office at the Institute of Mathematics and never heard himself described as a drifty man who walks about with his fly unzipped. Nothing she had said was true, but she had said it. She had actually said it. We were all going to die, but Helen Ferris had to kill people.

The voices persisted, but Nachman focussed on the suitcase and tried not to listen. Shirts, underwear, dresses, trousers, and tennis shoes lay in a confused pile, and a stack of papers had been tossed on top. Nachman admired the indifference with which the expensive-looking clothes had been flung into the suitcase. He saw passports and airline-ticket envelopes among the papers and reached out to open them. His hands were shaking. His heart swelled as he intruded upon the privacy of strangers. How could he do this?

Before he'd engaged the question, he felt a soft pressure against his leg. He looked down and saw an exceptionally fat Siamese cat. It must have hidden under the bed, frightened of Nachman, but had now clearly decided that he was no threat. The cat leaped onto the bed and stepped into the suitcase, settling on



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The black cow grazing with her newborn calf—
long-legged, unsteady—
or trucks going past the high road:
such things only claim
that I am looking out in search of memory,
not death. Those little kisses on my cheeks
my long-dead grandmother gave me, or
the soft dampness of my tears when
my mother didn't notice me
from beyond the closed door of her youth.

Today the dangling thread stops halfway down,
where my hands cannot touch it.
It's not that I wait for judgment.
But at times I see a shadow
move slowly over these, a shadow freed
from the past and from the future,
that contains the footsteps of that childhood
so light I can only think of squirrels
slipping in and out of the mango trees.

—*Jayanta Mahapatra*

top of the papers, as if it knew that Nachman had been about to look at them. The cat wanted Nachman's attention. Nachman stroked its back. A fat purring friend come to comfort and console him. While he stroked the cat with one hand, he tried to lift the corners of the papers with the other.

There were no rugs or drapes in the room, nothing to absorb the voices, and the moisture in the air only sharpened them. Nachman wasn't listening, but then, abruptly, the water noise ceased.

"He's had a hard time," Helen Ferris said. "He flew across the country to meet someone at the conference and he was stood up. I felt sorry for him."

"If I were stood up, I wouldn't tell anyone. Word gets around. People think you're a schmuck."

"He tried to be cheerful, but I could tell he was furious. The minute I said hello he started venting like a maniac." Helen Ferris's voice changed, becoming husky and teasing. "Tell me, Benjamin," she said.

"What?"

"That I'm beautiful."

"Come here."

She laughed. "No, no, no."

Nachman glanced toward the bathroom door. He imagined Helen Ferris's dark-brown hair, cut level with her chin, now a wet black shining cap around her eyes and cheeks. Her mouth, free of lipstick, was softened and bloated by hot water. Nachman thought she'd look better without lipstick. He remembered her motherly sexy eyes. Barefoot, she was maybe five-two, as high as his chest. She had wide hips. Did she have large breasts? Nachman hadn't noticed.

She squealed. The note was pitched so high that Nachman thought—terrified—that she had entered the room and was staring at him with shock and revulsion.

He shut the suitcase instantly. On the cat. It thrashed against the leather. Instead of flipping the case open, Nachman pressed the lid down harder, as if to hide the evidence. Not too hard, not hurting the cat, but thus, unintentionally, Nachman gave it time to piss.

When he realized that he was alone and hadn't been seen, he opened the case. The cat sped across the blue silk sheet and jumped onto the maple floor. It vanished behind the bar in the kitchen, and Nachman saw that it had deposited about a gallon of liquid in the suitcase.

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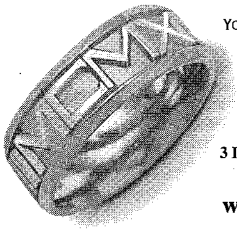
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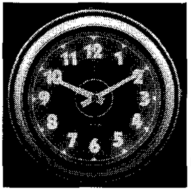
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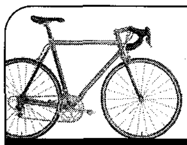
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Letters and legal papers had softened and wrinkled, edges curling as urine attacked their fibres.

In the elevator, Nachman kept his eyes on the doors and didn't glance at the mirrored walls. He didn't want to see his reflection. In a spasm of superstitious dread, he thought that if he saw it he might be obliged to leave it behind. He wanted to get entirely out of the building, taking himself and his reflection far away from the Ferris couple, particularly the naked squealing Helen Ferris. The Ferrises had taken something from him, torn a hole in his existence. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the doorman nod. Nachman went by with no acknowledgment and was immediately outside in the anonymous street. He wanted no human recognition, however minimal, as he headed downtown. Strangers passed like ghostly shapes in the night. Nachman walked mindlessly, block after block, until, gradually, he stopped feeling devastated and, in the cool nighttime air of the city, recovered the good simplicity of being himself. "A fool," he said, "but mine own."

He thought about finding a restaurant and having dinner. But he decided that he wasn't hungry and continued walking. In Washington Square Park, Nachman came to an empty bench and sat down. The paths were shadowed by trees, through which lamplight shone brokenly. He couldn't make out the features of passersby, and assumed that he was more or less invisible to them, too. Alone, unknown, unseen, he became deeply peaceful and free in his thoughts.

He thought about Helen Ferris. Her smile, which Nachman had read as anticipation, he now understood had meant something different, like expectation. Nachman had been expected to light up just as she had, but he had failed to recognize her. He was no longer the person he had been.

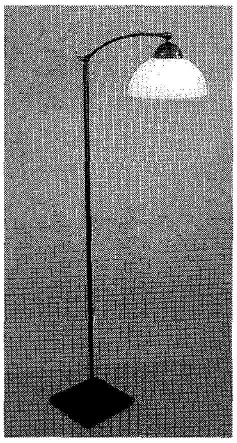
God knows what she thought of him now. Perhaps she believed that Nachman, not the cat, had pissed in the suitcase. She already thought he was drifty. Now she might think he was insane. What she might say about him beggared the imagination.

She had given him her card. He could phone her tomorrow, or perhaps the day after, from California, and explain what had happened. He could ask her to tell him her maiden name. If he finally remembered who she was, he might then be enriched by memories of himself. Memories are far superior to photographs, for example, which are good only for nostalgia, not for understanding. But did Nachman want those memories? The Nachman he no longer remembered was certainly himself. After all, who else could it be? Nachman realized that he had just performed an inductive act. Induction and analogy, in which he was highly gifted, were critical to mathematical intelligence.

It has been said that the unexamined life isn't worth living. Nachman wasn't against examining his life, but then what was a life? The day before yesterday he'd been in California, and tomorrow he could be almost anywhere on the globe. He could change his name, learn a new language, start a new existence. He could go to an exotic place, get married, have children of various colors and surprising features. People did it all the time. He could herd yaks in Mongolia, or be a slave trader in Sudan. It took no courage to consult a travel agent. Such metaphysicians were in the phone book. "Get me a flight to Mongolia," Nachman said to himself. "One way."

How absurd. He wasn't adventurous. As for "a life," it was what you read about in newspaper obituaries. He didn't need one. He would return to California and think only about mathematics. Just imagining Mongolia, with its bleak and freezing plains, had made him homesick.

On a bench nearby, partly obscured by shadows, a man began playing a guitar. The tune was a bossa nova, exquisitely sad, something like a blues only more finely nuanced and not at all macho. The rhythm was subtly engaging and it seemed to caress Nachman's heart. He thought again about phoning Helen Ferris. He'd apologize, certainly, for not having waited until she and her husband came out of the bathroom. Vaguely, he supposed that they might have a lot to say to him. His thoughts became still more vague as they surrendered to the bossa nova, and soon he wasn't thinking at all, only following the tune. It made a lovely sinuous shape, and then made it again and again, always a little different and yet always the same, as the rhythm carried its exquisite sadness toward infinity. ♦



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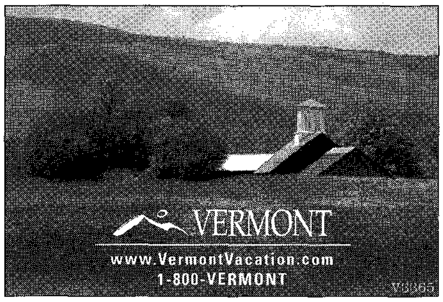

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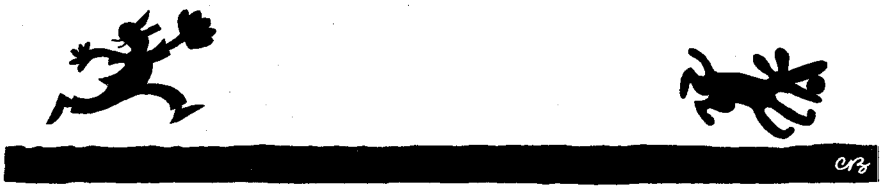


BOOKS

A GREAT MUSIC

Committees and creativity in the making of the King James Bible.

BY JAMES WOOD

Every afternoon in England, between about three and six o'clock, candles are lit in the great cathedrals and abbeys and college chapels, and the antique rite known as Evensong is observed. "Sung" would be more accurate than "observed"; the choir, boys first and then men, shuffles in at chain-gang pace, enters the carved stalls, and proceeds with what might be a brief concert. There is no need for anyone else, except an organist and a precentor, which is just as well, since often the shadowy nave and transepts are void of worshippers; perhaps a few tourists hover at the very back of the church, foggily attempting to gauge the event's exact religiosity.

This service is mostly music, and the foundation of its repertory is Elizabethan and Jacobean: Thomas Tallis, William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons. Yet the language that is sung—especially the mid-sixteenth-century language of Thomas Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer, and the early-seventeenth-century language of the King James Bible—is itself a great music. That these words and this formality of rite endure suggests how traditional the Church of England has remained. But it is a living tradition, too. Just as a Byrd anthem, to our ears, is freighted with all the music it has influenced (one hears not only later English gentleness but a dissonance that has had an impact on twentieth-century composition), so the language of the early Church of England now seems loaded with all its historical bequests.

Suppose the choir happens to sing a setting of Psalm 90, with its grand, desert evocation of life's ephemerality: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. . . . For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told." It will be hard not to hear in those words Macbeth's last soliloquy, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow," with its bitterness about "all our yesterdays" having lighted fools the way to dusty death, and its likening of life to "a tale / told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing." (Shakespeare would probably have read earlier versions of the psalm, such as those of Miles Coverdale and the Geneva Bible, which the King James translators adapted very closely and in places word for word.) Or if the reading is from Job, with its verse "Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place," and we hear the wonderful oddity of the verb's transitive use and its unexpected preposition "out," a reader of D. H. Lawrence might be prompted to recall how fond that intensely Biblical writer was of similarly strange prepositions and pungent transitive verbs: "Again the flash went through him dazing him out"; "Banford turtled up like a little fighting cock"; "following so submissively, gloating on him from behind." Or if the reading that day happened to be from Ruth 1:16—"for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge"—some keen listener might hear Gabriel Oak in "Far from the Madding Crowd," who proposes to Bathsheba, his future wife, saying, "Whenever you look up, there I shall be—and whenever I look up there will be you."

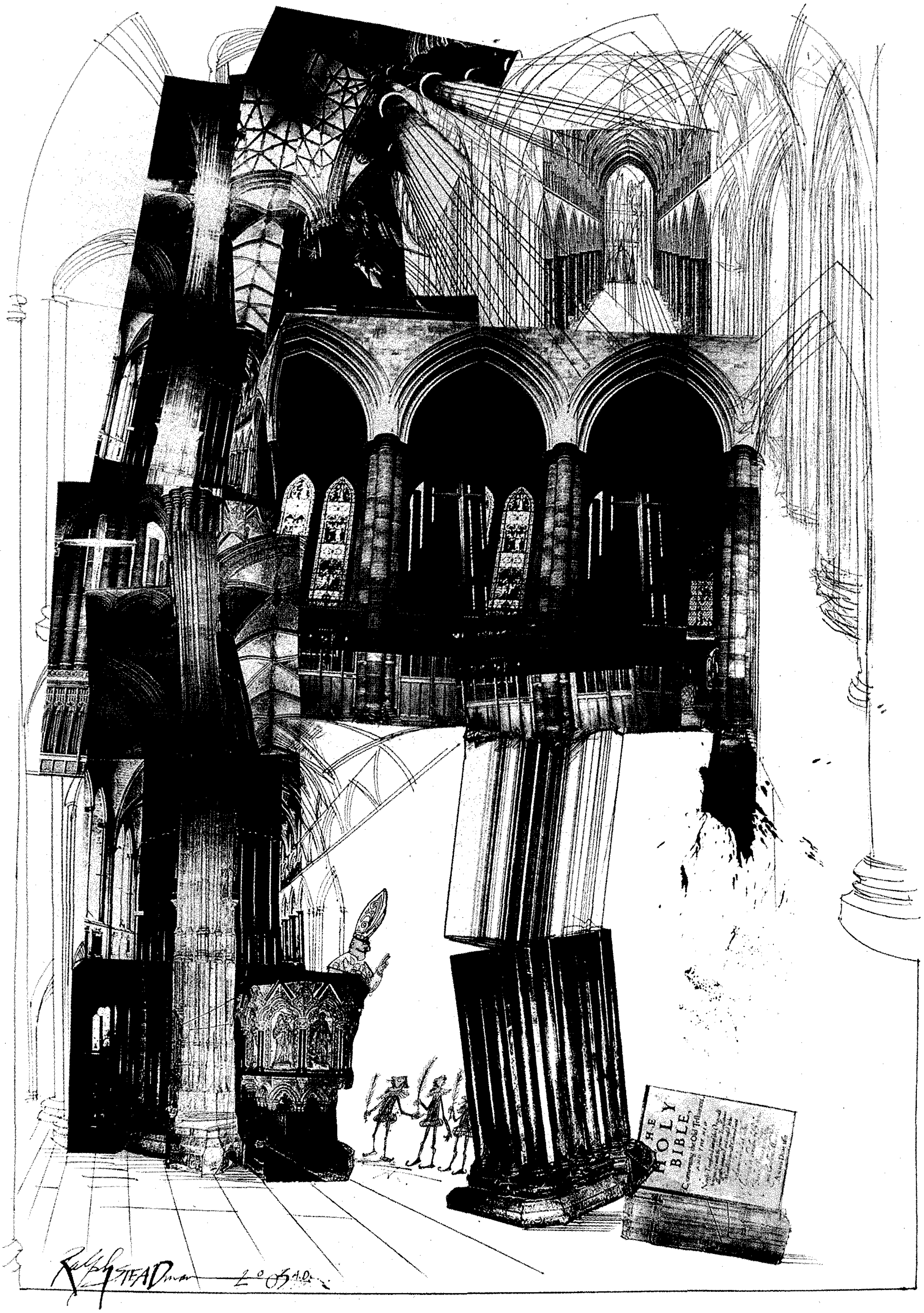
The pleasure is not so much in finding Biblical deposits in obviously Biblical writers like Shakespeare, Hardy, and Lawrence as in finding the same on apparently stonier ground. Philip Larkin, an English poet of decidedly secular leanings, disdained ecclesiastical liturgy, once calling it "that vast moth-eaten musical brocade." His beautiful poem, "Cut Grass," first appeared in 1974. At first sight, it appears to be simply a small offshoot from the big branch of lyric elegy:

> Cut grass lies frail:
> Brief is the breath
> Mown stalks exhale.
> Long, long the death
>
> It dies in the white hours
> Of young-leafed June
> With chestnut flowers,
> With hedges snowlike strewn,
>
> White lilac bowed,
> Lost lanes of Queen Anne's lace,
> And that high-builded cloud
> Moving at summer's pace.

But, once one has encountered Psalm 90, with its verse about how humankind's passage is like grass ("In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth"), the broadly elegiac theme of Larkin's poem has a suddenly sacred basis; and what of that psalmlike colon at the end of Larkin's first line, or that compound, "high-builded," with its archaic inflected verb, one that appears frequently in the King James version (Psalm 122, for instance: "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together")? The poem speaks of "lost lanes," but even if these English lanes have been lost, the English linguistic lanes have not, and doesn't the poem's diction, its history-cocked ear, in fact reclaim them?

How the King James Bible came about is the theme of Adam Nicolson's fine book, "God's Secretaries" (HarperCollins; $24.95). It is a popular book as popular books used to be, a breeze rather than a scholarly sweat, but humanely erudite, elegantly written, passionately felt, and jauntily unfootnoted (alas). It is also written with a love for the language of the King James Bible. Nicolson is excited by this verbal monument—"En-

King James wanted a translation of the Bible that would exemplify the harmony and grandeur of his reign.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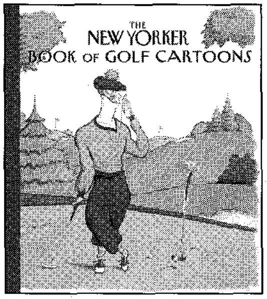

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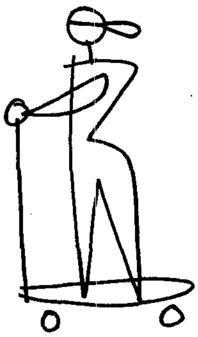
gland's equivalent of the great baroque cathedral it never built," as he puts it—and his excitement is contagious.

He begins by reminding us of the ever-peculiar fact that its delicate style was the creation of a committee, or several committees. At Hampton Court, in January, 1604, King James I, newly enthroned, agreed to the proposal of one of his advisers that the new reign deserved a new Bible in English. Of course, there had been translations, or attempts at translations, before, and Nicolson unwisely slights the towering examples set by such men as William Tyndale, in the fifteen-twenties, and Miles Coverdale, in the fifteen-thirties. One scholar has reckoned that "approximately 60 per cent of the text of the English Bible had reached its final literary form before the King James version was produced." Tyndale's rhythms pulse throughout the King James version, and many phrases of Coverdale's, such as "the valley of the shadow of death" and "three score years and ten"—where the Hebrew has simply "seventy"—are ensconced in the King James version, whose translators themselves announced in their preface that what they had produced was not so much a new translation as a final revision of all the previous English Bibles.

But Coverdale's Bible, the first complete one to be printed in English, had been translated in part from Latin (the Catholic Vulgate edition) and German (Martin Luther's translation); the King James version would need to take on all the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New. To this end, the King set out to assemble an extraordinary panoply of the country's finest linguists, divided into six "companies" of nine men each, "a body of men nearly four times the size of any previous Bible enterprise." In retrospect, we can see that this project fell into propitious arms: the English language had reached a high point of flexibility and rhetorical power—the King James version was composed between 1604 and 1611, thus coinciding with the writing of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies and his last plays. This was the age of the antiquarian, the amateur scholar, the ecclesiastical polyglot, the obsessed bibliophile. James I was himself a learned man, reared in Scotland by one of Montaigne's tutors, and capable, Nicolson says, of translating any passage of the Bible from Latin into French and then into English.



Many formidable minds were involved in the translation. Nicolson, whose previous books include an account of the restoration of Windsor Castle and a portrait of life on the Shiant Isles (the tiny Hebridean islands off the northwest coast of Scotland), is a skilled storyteller, and he compacts large amounts of research into alluring anecdotal packets. His book is really a long gaze at the gallery of men who made up the six companies, and readers will learn a good deal about the ecclesiastical and university cultures of the early seventeenth century. The most prominent of the translators was Lancelot Andrewes. Now probably known best—if at all—from T. S. Eliot's essay about his prose, Andrewes was the Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and the Dean of Westminster. He was also the greatest preacher of his time, and a remarkable linguist who spoke fifteen modern and six ancient languages. Andrewes was in charge of the First Westminster Company, whose mission was to translate the first twelve books of the Old Testament.

Nicolson shows how Andrewes's combination of unworldly faith (he spent five hours every morning in solitary prayer) and mastery of churchcraft (he was adept at pulling strings, soothing royal tempers, and maintaining power) was characteristic of the Bible project. In an age of the divine right of kings, devotion to God and devotion to temporal power were united. Likewise, the King wanted a Bible that would both honor its sacred sources and emblazon the new unity and humanism of his reign. To that end, he forbade marginal notes, except for the explanation of Hebrew or Greek words "which cannot without some circumlocution soe breifly and fitly be expressed in ye Text." The Geneva Bible, produced by English Puritans in exile, was spattered with contentious notes, and the King, with an instinct for the via media that the English Church had trod since the Reformation—fighting Rome temporally but often cleaving to it spiritually—wanted a Bible that smoothed contention into majesty. It was the job of the translators' rhetoric to elide doctrinal differences. "This is the heart of

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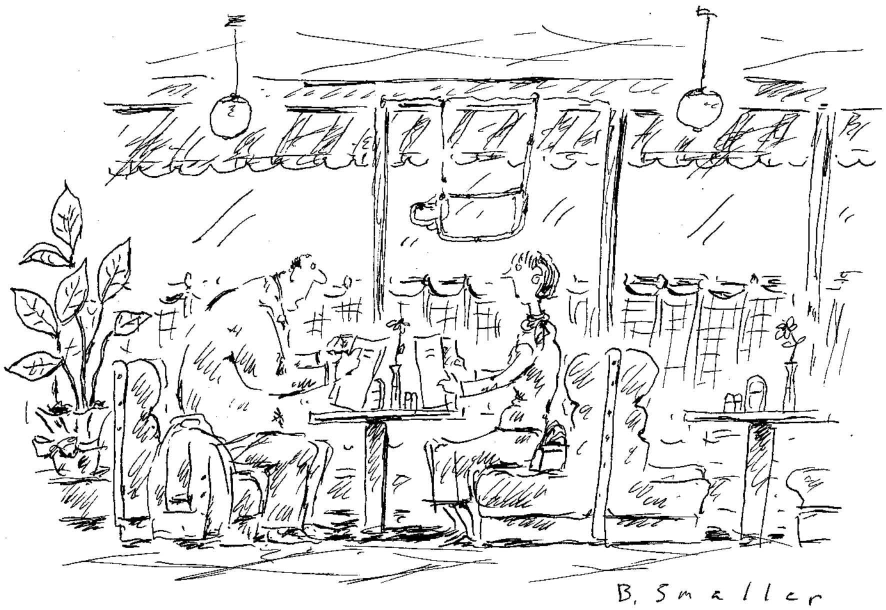
the new Bible as an irenicon," Nicolson writes with typical shrewdness, "an organism that absorbed and integrated difference, that included ambiguity and by doing so established peace. It is the central mechanism of the translation, one of immense lexical subtlety, a deliberate carrying of multiple meanings beneath the surface of a single text."

Each of the translators worked alone on the portion assigned to his company before conferring with his eight colleagues. Once a company had finished a book, it circulated it to the other five groups, so that they might consider it "seriously and judiciously: for His Majestie is verie carefull of this poynt." From notes taken at one of these final meetings, we know that, as befits an essentially oral text, the proceedings were oral. One man read aloud while the others listened, speaking up only when they found fault. They were a various crowd, and Nicolson's delightful sketches bring them to life. Among them were Richard Thomson, a celebrated translator of Martial, a linguist with correspondents in Italy, France, and Germany; William Bedwell, a mathematician and Arabist; Miles Smith, who described himself as "covetous of nothing but books," and who kept no books in his library that he had not read; George Abbot, the Master of University College, Oxford, who once had a hundred and forty Oxford undergraduates arrested for not removing their hats as he entered St. Mary's Church; the dashing Sir Henry Savile, Provost of Eton, who was the first English translator of Tacitus, and who also worked for years on a vast edition of the writings of St. John Chrysostom, the fourth-century archbishop of Constantinople; and John Bois, a prodigy to rival John Stuart Mill, having written Hebrew by the time he was six and become a student at Cambridge by the age of fourteen. He told people that he had every extant Greek text on his shelves. One of Nicolson's most interesting passages concerns John Layfield, a Greek scholar who had accompanied the Earl of Cumberland on an expedition across the ocean to the Caribbean, and had written a fine account of what he saw. Quoting from Layfield's description of Dominica's lushness, lingering over the marvellous phrase "the trees doe continually maintaine themselves in a greene-good liking," Nicolson hints at the nicely scandalous idea that the Caribbean was in Layfield's mind when he helped to translate the account of Eden in Genesis.

What did they do? How and why did they get so much right? Here Nicolson pushes against the rather too heavily mortgaged boundaries of his genre; one feels him curtailing literary criticism in the interest of narrative. Yet he is an excellent critic, and another fifty or so pages would have made his book scholarly as well as popular. It has been said that FitzGerald's version of "The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám" is obviously too good a poem to be a good translation. Yet often the King James translators secured that great, supposedly unachievable paradox: they were both faithful and unfaithful. They announced in their preface that they would not be held to a "uniformitie of phrasing, or to an identitie of words," so that, for instance, they would feel free to translate the word for "purpose" sometimes as "purpose" and sometimes as "intent." In fact, they were fruitfully inconsistent. At once conservative and radical, they honored a uniformity of phrasing when it seemed thematically appropriate, and expanded into diversity when meaning seemed to sanction it. The Hebrew texts in particular feature what have been called "key-words," words or phrases repeated and subtly modified in a passage, as a kind of threaded meaning. The English translators were sensitive watchers of these words, and the King James Bible is considered superlative for the pursuit of such threads. The scholars Robert Alter and Gerald Hammond have discussed the technique as it appears in II Samuel 3, in which the phrase "and he went in peace" undergoes a series of variations analogous to those of the original Hebrew:

> And David sent Abner away; *and he went in peace.* And behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, *and he was gone in peace.* When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king and he hath sent him away, *and he is gone in peace.* Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? Behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, *and he is quite gone?*

Hammond notes that later versions of this passage, like the Jerusalem Bible and the New English Bible, smother the effect



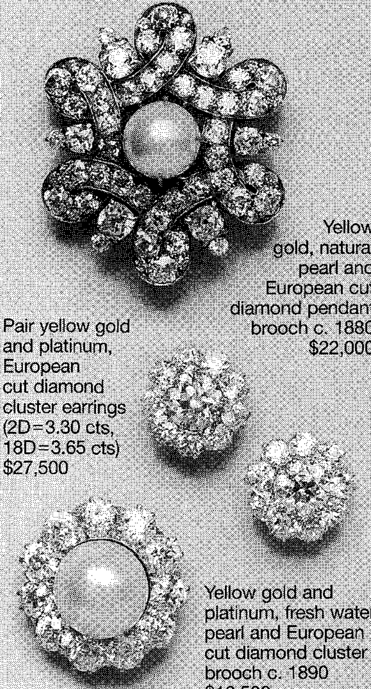
"My whole life stretches out before me as a series of egg-white omelettes."

• •

by varying their translations of the key-phrase too drastically. Repetition and its close family of varieties is at the heart of the King James triumph. Jacobean English was not merely unafraid of repetition; it cherished it. This love of repetition and muffled repetition also meshes well with the Hebrew of the Old Testament, which is characterized by a kind of "semantic parallelism." As Alter points out, if "hearken" is used in one verse, "listen" may be used in the next. One of his examples is from II Samuel 22 (in his translation): "For with you I charge a barrier, / with My God I vault a wall." This extends into the New Testament, of course. Hebrews 12:6 has: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

The English translators are masters of repetition, often using a musical form of the key-words technique to signal minuscule changes in intensity even when the words themselves do not change. There are the great words from Isaiah 61, for example, some of the loveliest in the Bible: "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness to spring forth before all the nations." Nowadays, no writer would risk the potential bathos of ending a passage with a repetition of its predecessor. But isn't the phrase changing even as it is being repeated? At first, it is only the earth that brings forth flowers or causes other flowers to spring forth; by the last phrase, it is the Lord God himself who now causes righteousness, and not merely buds, to spring forth.

So there is a one-word answer to the question of what the translators got right. It is music. And here music is meaning. Take the well-known words from Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Tyndale had "Come unto me all ye that laboure and are laden and I will ease you." The Jacobeans retained Tyndale's rhythm; but it was they who added that simple, brief word—to our modern ears a marvellous half-adjective and half-adverb—*heavy* laden. Their desire, made explicit in the preface, was to use as many English words as possible, "commodiously," for the greater glory of God. Often, they strove for the widest possible meaning, the most ambiguous resonances; the musical equivalent might be the organ stop known as a "mixture," in which tones of related pitch are played simultaneously by a single key. A famous example occurs in I Kings 19:12: "And after the earthquake, a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice." Coverdale's earlier rendition had "a still soft hissing," and the so-called Matthew's Bible, of 1537 (which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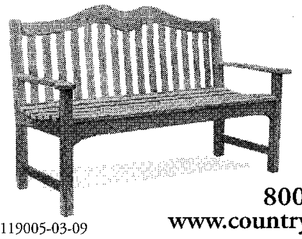
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closely followed Tyndale), had "a small still voice." The later translators, by changing "small still voice" to "still small voice," retained the literal meaning of Matthew's Bible while playing on the double sense of "still," adding the extra suggestion that the voice has always been small and will continue to be (is *still* small).

At times, there was too much music. The translators' determination to use as many English words as possible sometimes results in versions that, by modern scholarly standards, can be somewhat free and inexact. Nicolson loves the King James version too much to criticize it, but the Princeton New Testament scholar Bruce M. Metzger complains in his book "The Bible in Translation" (not found in Nicolson's bibliography) that the word *katargeō*, which occurs twenty-seven times in the New Testament, is subjected to an anarchy of different English approximations, eighteen in all, including "abolish, cease, cumber, deliver, destroy, do away . . . fail, loose, bring (come) to naught, put away (down), vanish away, make void." And, of course, there were errors, many of them. In I Kings 13:27, the wrong pronoun prompts unwitting comedy: "And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him." Modern translations have changed "him" to "it," but my copy of the King James Bible, at least, still proudly bears "him."

Many people have commented on the mixture of simplicity and grandeur in the King James version, so that we can go without apparent difficulty from "a drop of a bucket" or "the apple of his eye" or "give up the ghost" to the larger tremolo of "I water my couch with my tears" and of Job's "Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" Even amid the furies and billows of Isaiah, we come upon a simple speaking voice: "I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord . . . according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us." It is the sort of movement that is also found in the Psalms, where deepest lamentation can lighten into almost colloquial address: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake" (Psalm 17).

The great master of such combinations is Paul. In his letter to the Romans, a rhetorical supremacy is reached, whereby an inherited Hebrew parallelism, the colloquialism of an elder addressing new congregations, an almost legalistic restraint, and an intense, rising repetition all newly converge. A series of rhetorical questions closes that epistle's Chapter 8:

> What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

And then come these final verses:

> For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again, one is struck by the daring of ending a passage of rising exhortation with the calm, almost finicky precision of "For I am persuaded that." But Paul's discourse often sounds a note of excited reticence; he is very good at taking the already resonant Old Testament words such as "satisfy" and "acceptable" and pulling from them a kind of controlled, ironic fervor. He writes, for instance, also in Romans, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." All the weight of suppressed emotion falls on those desperately restrained words "acceptable" and "reasonable." The English translators could measure the gravity of a word, its buried anchor, and they knew—indeed, they believed, of course—that Jewish and Christian messianism warranted both exultancy and stoicism, an endlessly suppressed anticipation. One waits in great anticipation; but one waits and waits and waits, and so one learns how to measure the longevity of one's excitement. Thus the decorum of these quietly quivering words: "satisfy," "acceptable," "persuade," "reasonable." Among modern writers, T. S. Eliot, who wrote of what he called "relevant intensity" in the prose of Lancelot Andrewes, knew best how to get this King James atmosphere of controlled passion. In "The Waste Land," how severely but carefully his lines fall on the word "patience":

> He who was living is now dead
> We who were living are now dying
> With a little patience. ♦

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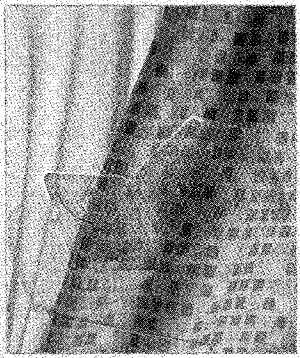

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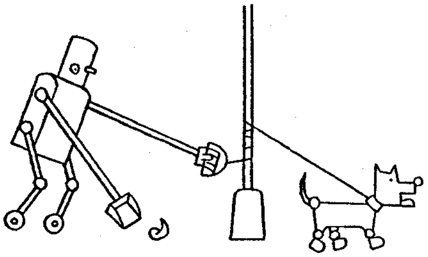
BRIEFLY NOTED

Tide Running, *by Oonya Kempadoo (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22).* The heaving power of the tides and the rhythmic "swellin' " of the sea around the island of Tobago are the erotic and spiritual center of Kempadoo's second novel, the story of a ménage à trois involving a beautiful Tobagan man and some recent arrivals—a wealthy mixed-race couple, recklessly "flirting with newness" in a place that still bears the historical scars of the slave trade. With a finely tuned ear for the cadences of the Caribbean, Kempadoo, the British-born child of Guyanese parents, examines the strange symbiosis between the newcomers, seduced by local color, and the impoverished islanders, hungry for consumer goods. As the trio's relationship presses to its disastrous conclusion, she succeeds in turning an unsettling tale into an exploration of the global politics of desire.

1929, *by Frederick Turner (Counterpoint; $25).* The hard-drinking, sweet-tempered cornettist and composer Bix Beiderbecke has held a fascination for jazz fans ever since his death, in 1931, at the age of twenty-eight. (There was a popular novel based on his life as early as 1938.) Turner's novel weaves this mystique into its own fabric, framing the events leading to Bix's downfall with the story of two characters—a brother and sister, both associated with Al Capone's Chicago racket—who become entangled in the jazzman's messy life. Written in a period-appropriate overheated, romantic prose, and incorporating memorable appearances by Capone, Bing Crosby, Maurice Ravel, Paul Whiteman, and Clara Bow, the book is by turns corny, intoxicating, and ineffably sad, like the "hot" music it is designed to evoke.



Identity in Democracy, *by Amy Gutmann (Princeton; $27.95).* Typically, discussions of identity politics in American life are tinged with vitriol. Gutmann's book, by contrast, calms the debate with an unflappably reasonable analysis of the relationship between liberal democracy and associations based on race, creed, sexuality, or the like. She argues that, since humans are social creatures, identity politics is a permanent fixture of the political landscape. At best, identity groups can play a vital role in protecting the legitimate interests of their members. But Gutmann also cites examples—ranging from the Boy Scouts to a Pueblo woman punished by her tribe for marrying outside it—in which these groups have been oppressive to their own members and discriminatory toward outsiders. Gutmann suggests that we should judge identity groups on a case-by-case basis, assessing the specific work they do and remembering that the ultimate goal for any democracy is to insure "civic equality, equal freedom and opportunity" not for groups but for individuals.

Roone, *by Roone Arledge (HarperCollins; $25.95).* It's hard to believe that someone actually invented the slow-motion replay—it's as if someone had invented butter—but this was just one of many techniques by which the television producer Roone Arledge revolutionized sports coverage, from the nineteen-sixties onward. Having brought the imperatives of show business to sports, he moved on to news, creating several landmark shows, such as "20/20" and "Nightline." Arledge, who died last December, seems to have had little interest in his personal life (one wife divorced him after he bagged a Hawaiian vacation to orchestrate coverage of a college football game), and most of his memoir is an insider's account of ABC's ramshackle beginnings, its innovations as an up-and-coming network, and the difficulties brought on by corporate ownership. Not above a little score-settling but full of love for his work, Arledge is an infectious raconteur, capable of narrating even the most labyrinthine boardroom maneuvering as if it were as exciting as a sports event.

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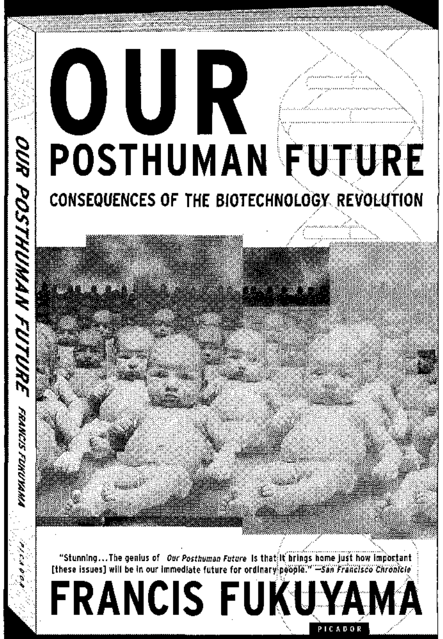
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ON TELEVISION

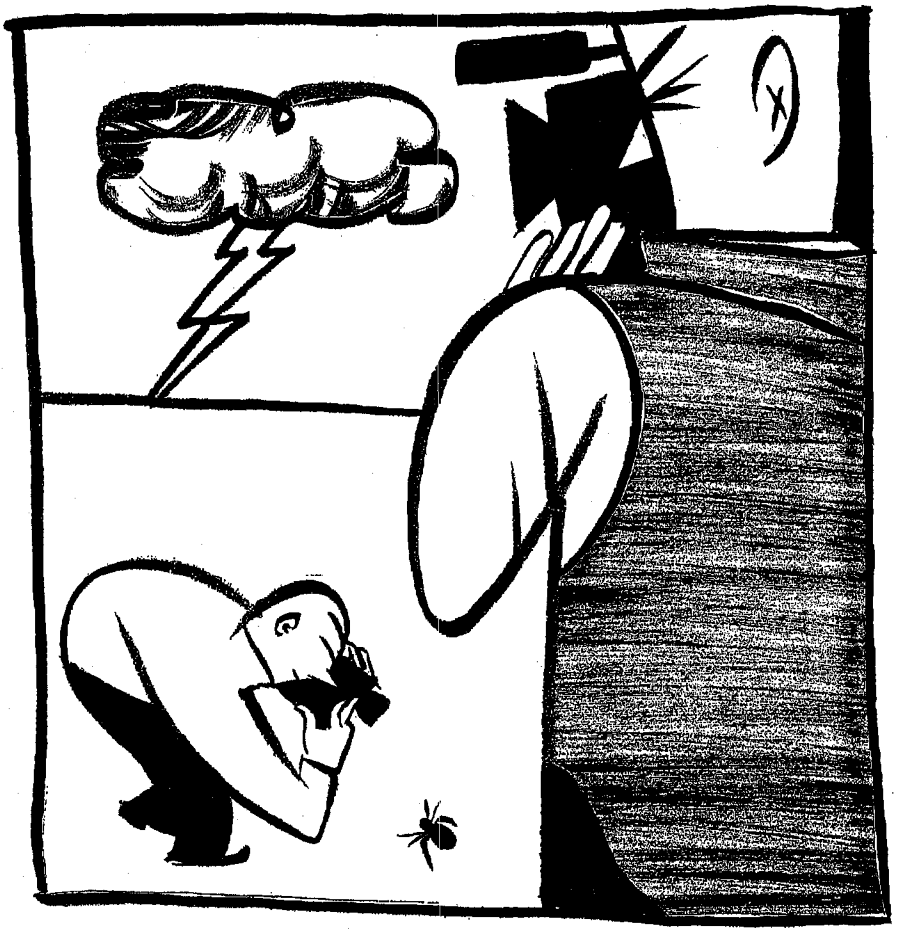
THE VISION THING

What makes public television valuable.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

One day in mid-April, CNN's Wolf Blitzer, still overseas, said, "To our viewers, here's your chance to weigh in on the war in Iraq. Our Web question of the day is this: Where do you think Saddam Hussein is?" We were given three choices—hiding in Iraq, dead, left the country—and were encouraged to log on and vote with our fingers. Cable news has a habit of treating viewers like children on a long car trip, giving us diverting, time-killing games to keep us focussed on the TV instead of thinking our own thoughts or punching our little brother. Count the out-of-state license plates; tell us where you think Saddam Hussein is. Recently, however, this call for meaningless audience participation has been joined by another kind of meaninglessness. During the war, news broadcasts, which have always, obviously, depended on the camera to illustrate stories, began allowing the camera to tell the whole story, and since then they have continued to cede their power to the equipment and its unblinking eye. Thoughtfulness has fallen through the cracks. The commentary from inside the cable news studios has become louder and more shrill, and what we're getting from the outside is shapeless visual data: endless shots of tornado damage, hours of footage taken from a helicopter outside Case Western Reserve University's business school while a gunman was inside, a couple of hundred replays of Laci Peterson's body being hauled up from a rocky shore in California, and President Bush strutting his stuff on an aircraft carrier umpteen times. We're being led around by the eyeballs.

What has often been seen as a weakness of the traditional network news broadcasts—the fact that they turn news into stories, with some kind of shape and editorial vision—now looks more like a strength. But those shows last only half an hour, and there's a limit to how deep you can go in twenty-two minutes. The long-format magazine shows on the networks also often fail to illuminate, choosing instead to take the well-worn main road to heartbreak or inspiration. Katie Couric's one-hour special about the woman known as the Central Park jogger was boilerplate from the first minute, with Couric saying things like "At first she wanted to change the world, and considered joining the foreign service, but in bullish nineteen-eighties America, Wall Street was the place to go." (*Now* you tell me.) We were fifteen minutes into the show before Couric and the woman sat down together for an interview. Just as they were about to start talking, the show cut to a commercial: first things first.



The "Independent Lens" documentaries are good examples of PBS's inclusiveness.

TOM BACHTELL

Twenty-four-hour cable news channels have the potential—the time—to do more, but for the most part they take the easy way out, rewarding our idle curiosity and not engaging our active curiosity about the world or about history. I watched more than a hundred hours of war coverage, and it wasn't until antiquities were being stolen from Baghdad's museums that I heard anyone talk about anything that had happened in Iraq before the first Gulf War; you'd have thought that the country didn't exist until 1991. (Which, if true, would explain why Bush, in his first address to the Iraqis after the war, patted them on the head and called them "a good and gifted people," as if they had just reached those difficult pubescent years and needed a little bucking up.) The cable news channels have become storm chasers, sticking to stories that stimulate our retinas but not much else. A new face on MSNBC, a liberal-bashing former congressman named Joe Scarborough, who swings his little club with about as much discrimination as Bamm-Bamm, the diaper-clad pugilist on "The Flintstones," starts his evening show by saying, "You're about to enter Scarborough country. No passport required." Exactly: intellectually, the show is a trip around the block, ending up every night exactly where it started.

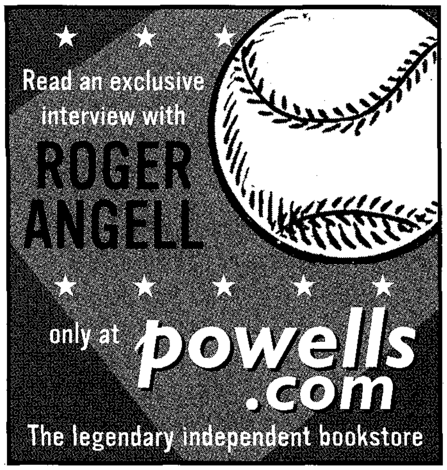
So where do you go for in-depth nonfiction TV? Why, public television, that's where, even though in recent years PBS seems to have lost some of its reason for being. There are good documentaries on the cable channels, and HBO, say, doesn't waste its time on been-there, seen-that programming, such as the biography of Jacqueline Onassis that PBS aired a few years ago. The History Channel, A&E, Bravo, and the Discovery Channel have all made incursions into public television's territory as well. I'm sometimes ambivalent about the self-declared good intentions of public television, as I am about a culture that now gives trophies to kids for merely participating in a sport, regardless of how well they perform. And public television itself often seems ambivalent about its identity, unsure whether it wants to be a macramé plant holder or a shiny electric scooter from the Sharper Image. It often ends up somewhere in between, resorting to middle-of-the-road, commercial fare—Deepak Chopra, Suze Orman, nostalgic pop-music shows—to pull in money at fund-raising time. But, at the end of the day, I would, and do, support public television's inclusiveness, with all its occasionally tedious shagginess. (And since Scarborough went on a tirade about public television a couple of weeks ago, I have made up my mind to love it more than ever. Scarborough, in fact, might benefit from some of the educational programming on public TV; the other night, in a rant about foreign-born students learning English, he referred to Florida as a "transitory state." That's Florida for you—here today, gone tomorrow.)

The last three documentaries in this season's PBS series "Independent Lens" are good examples of what makes public TV valuable. Each one is the product of an individual vision, and each one would be unlikely to air anywhere else. "Razing Appalachia," a film directed and produced by Sasha Waters, which is on this week, goes to Blair, West Virginia, a small town in the southern part of the state. The town is divided by a five-year-long dispute: on one side is a coal company, which wants to extend its area of operations, and the local miners, and on the other is the Environmental Protection Agency and residents of the area who are trying to preserve what's left of the landscape and their heritage. It's a familiar story, and one with no apparent good solution; mining enables people to live in the area, but the area won't be worth living in if mining goes on forever. Waters's film captures the depth of the convictions on both sides—one man says that the mining operations are taking away both the past and the future, and others talk about feeding their families—and leaves you wondering how the story will end. It is generally not the American way to leave money sitting in the ground, but the anti-mining organizers may yet win out. They're not, as one of them says, "just a bunch of dumb hillbillies . . . and even if you have a dumb hillbilly, they know what's right and wrong as far as their land is concerned."

"Hansel Mieth: Vagabond Photographer," directed by Nancy Schiesari, and showing next week, has a serendipitous quality; Schiesari happened to come across Mieth's work in a magazine, just in time to be able to interview her before she died. Mieth, a German immigrant who worked for *Life* in the thirties and forties, will be a discovery for most viewers of the film, and her work seems of particular interest right now, at a time when the Great Depression and the Second World War suddenly seem closer than ever. Before arriving in the United States, Mieth had already experienced a kind of existential unfairness: her youngest sister had died because her family was poor and the doctor wasn't that interested in treating her, and after she and a friend, Otto Hagel, went off, as teen-agers, to ride the rails through Europe they weren't welcome anymore in their home town. They had seen too much of the world, and it was felt that their thoughts were "no longer pure." Mieth and Hagel, who became her lifelong partner, found jobs on the West Coast as migrant field-workers, and Mieth began to take pictures of the life around them, displaying extraordinary spine when she was ordered not to photograph striking workers and the police who came to break the strike. "We were told many times not to photograph, but if you will do anything you are told by a superior, you wouldn't be anything," she says. The humanistic, pro-underdog bent that caused *Life* to hire Mieth was also what got her in trouble; she was later blacklisted and lost her job. Schiesari's film is marred only by orthographically sloppy credits ("the Steven Spielburg Holocaust Museum," "Immogene Cunningham") and music that occasionally drowns out what the subjects on camera are saying. It has some wonderful moments, such as Mieth recalling a revelation she had while looking at one of her own photographs—of an angry-seeming monkey sitting in the sea. The scene provides a window into her work and her life, and the connection between them.

"Daddy & Papa" is the kind of film that makes some people want to pull the plug on public television. It is, as one of its subjects says, about people who are "America's worst nightmare": gay men who become fathers. Johnny Symons, who wrote, produced, and directed the film, is a gay parent himself. The film is about his and his partner's decision to adopt a child, and it also tells the stories of several other families, including a father in Florida who is prevented by state law from adopting his son; a couple in California who raise a daughter together and then, after thirteen years, separate; and a single gay man who takes in two brothers who were in separate foster homes. What you see going on in the families here is not very different from what you see going on in conventional upper-middle-class households, but these men, who had to go out of their way to create their families, are able to talk about wanting children in a way that's moving and sweet. They are eloquent about both the richness of family life and the stereotypes that they have to confront, sometimes in unexpected quarters; one couple takes a friend's kids to "Gay Day" at Great America, only to discover that it's meant for grownups—all the children's rides are closed.

These films are not great art, but they reward your patience, and at the moment it's refreshing to see programming without a high polish. (And they're a bargain—PBS could buy ten documentaries for the "Independent Lens" series for what the government spent on the media-briefing set it installed in Qatar during the war.) Watching "Independent Lens" and "P.O.V.," a similar series on PBS, is like going into an independent bookstore—you don't always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn't even know you wanted. ♦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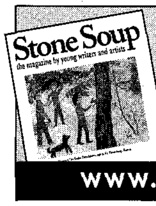
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THE THEATRE

LAUGHTER IN THE DARK

Woody Allen on the killer instinct.

BY JOHN LAHR

For nearly fifty years, Woody Allen has spun the dross of morbidity into the gold of comedy. The results of this alchemy have been precious and far-reaching. No modern comedian can match Allen's range or the quality of his output. His humor pieces for *The New Yorker* and other magazines, collected in three volumes, include some of the finest comic writing of the postwar period, and, as writer, director, and (usually) star of his movies, Allen is the only comedian since Charlie Chaplin to entirely control his own product—more than thirty films, of which about a dozen have entered America's cinematic repertoire. But the most important of Allen's creations is his own persona: Woody the schlepper triumphant. Where the early American comics made a myth of hope, Woody makes a myth of retreat. In him, the charm of agony replaces the charm of action. As he famously observed, "How can I find meaning in a finite universe given my shirt and waist size?" In the seventies and eighties, Allen, an entrepreneur of collapse, defined a winded America; now, as he slyly admits in "Writer's Block," two new one-act plays (at the Atlantic Theatre Company), fatigue has become an issue for him, too.

Revenge is the gasoline that fuels great comedy. (It's no coincidence, for instance, that "Getting Even" is the title of Allen's first volume of humor.) In "Riverside Drive," the better play on the twin bill, the wild, infantile, murderous impulses of the unconscious are the subject of forlorn meditation. Waiting on a park bench by the Hudson River, a self-absorbed screenwriter, Jim Swain (Paul Reiser), fidgets in that special Woody Allen ozone of fretful desire. He is expecting his mistress, with whom he is planning to break up. A bearded homeless man, the aptly named Fred Savage (Skipp Sudduth), intrudes on Swain's solitude, unsettling him first by identifying him as a writer, then by claiming uncredited authorship of Swain's latest movie, the idea for which, he maintains, Swain stole from a conversation of Savage's, overheard in Central Park.

In a familiar dramatic trope, Allen gives life to the division in his own nature—the Dionysian and Apollonian war inside him—and then he lets these urges duke it out onstage. Savage, who seems to hear voices beamed primarily from the Empire State Building, offers himself as Swain's collaborator. "You're good at construction and dialogue, but you lack inspiration," he tells Swain. "That's why you have to rely on me." He adds later, "You're good at nuts and bolts, but you need someone who can light a fire." As it turns out, arson has played a role in Savage's life story, along with mental illness, electroshock treatment, and sundry acts of violence. When Swain's pert mistress, Barbara (Kate Blumberg), finally arrives, Swain flubs the confrontation, and Savage ends up spilling the beans for him. Barbara exits, threatening to speak to Swain's wife, and while Swain contemplates every craven maneuver of strategic apology, Savage sees only one solution: murder. Here, Allen is at his most trenchant:

> SWAIN: It's psychologically, morally, and intellectually wrong. It's madness.
> SAVAGE: It's a leap into the unthinkable.
> SWAIN: Let it remain unthought.

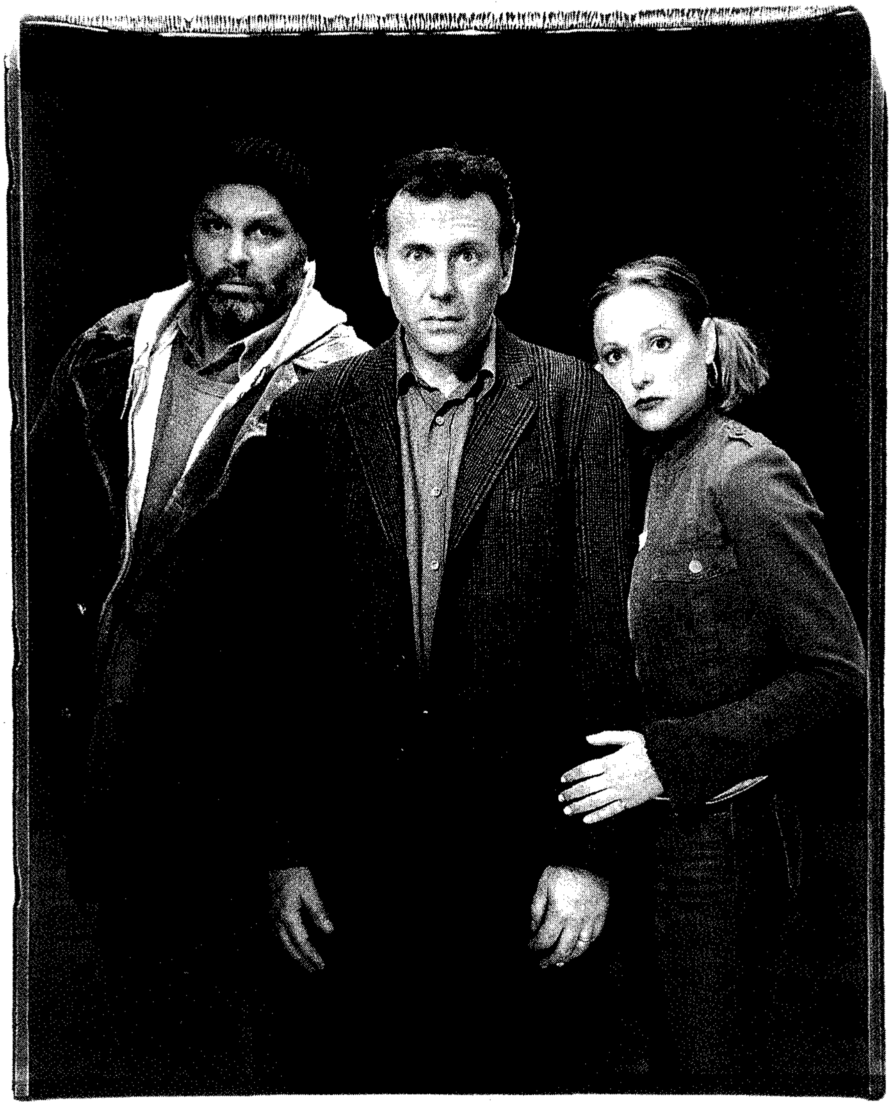
This crisis of the heart is Allen's metaphor for the crisis of the imagination. Swain distrusts and can't connect with his own unconscious desires. "You're too radical," he tells his new acquaintance. "You're too reasonable," Savage counters. "We have hit on the kernel of your problem, kid. You can't make the leap." The standoff allows Allen the opportunity for some tasty comic flimflammery. "She's a human being," Swain protests.

> SAVAGE: You say that like it's a good thing.
> SWAIN: Isn't it?
> SAVAGE: I don't know. Have you ever gone to a tenants' meeting in a co-op?

When Barbara returns, with Draconian demands—half a million dollars, three hundred thousand of it payable within twenty-four hours—Savage acts on his "moment of inspiration," killing her and tossing her into the fast-flowing Hudson. "All that elaborate planning—it was bad writing," he tells Swain. "That's the difference between us two," he goes on. "With you it would have been labored and overanalyzed. . . . To me it just *felt* right." As Swain heads back to his bourgeois normality, Savage fires off a parting shot: "You're a good professional—although I would recommend eventually you find someone to team up with. There's no shame in collaborating—it's just that you're missing a part."

The second play, "Old Saybrook," a farce about infidelity, turns out to epitomize what's missing: Allen's ability to penetrate his own material. At the outset, he adroitly cranks his fun machine into action. A passive-aggressive accountant and his wife (Christopher Evan Welch and Clea Lewis) drop by the Connecticut house that they once lived in, only to get drawn into the new tenants' comic slipstream of sexual confession and accusation. Then, as if Feydeau had suddenly passed the baton to Pirandello, the play changes tone and attack. The characters produce a wild card: a bound-and-gagged playwright named Max (Richard Portnow). "Sometimes an idea seems great, but after you work on it for a while it just doesn't go anyplace," Max says. What we're watching, it appears, is the farce that went no place; the other characters are simply escapees from the prison of Max's bottom drawer.

This may be Allen's idea of a coup de théâtre, but unfortunately it's more of a coup de grâce. To admit to your failures is occasionally a good comic maneuver in writing, but not, I think, from the stage. Once the play's momentum is lost, so is the audience's attention, which even Allen's parody of a happy ending fails to win back. "I feel my writer's block lifting," Max says, as he hits on an idea to "give this little sex farce dimension and heart." He tells the characters, "The key word is 'commercial'—I'm sorry, 'forgiveness,' " and then leaves them to fill in the blanks. "Every life needs a little fiction in it," the accountant says. "Too much reality is a very nasty thing." That is the enduring burden of Allen's song, but in this particular comic equation the problem is that there's not *enough* reality, or, for that matter, energy.



Skipp Sudduth, Paul Reiser, and Kate Blumberg. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.

"Cavedweller," Kate Moira Ryan's jejune adaptation of the Dorothy Allison novel (at New York Theatre Workshop), is a fairy tale of redemption that more or less proves Woody Allen's point about stage-managed forgiveness. Here, Delia Byrd (the appealing Deirdre O'Connell), the louche forty-year-old former lead singer of a band called Mud Dog, goes in search of the two daughters she abandoned back in Georgia fourteen years ago, before grabbing the live wire of fame. This episodic play has its hand on its heart and its eyes on your wallet. It poses a profound question—Can a bad mother repair the damage she has caused?—only to trivialize the answer with melodrama and caricature. In real life, this kind of emotional reparation would occur the day gallstones are jewelry, but, under the unprobing direction of Michael Greif, the family's full emotional overhaul is accomplished in about two and a half noisy hours. Thanks to Delia's dutiful penance, the angry abandoned daughters—one a renegade, the other a religious zealot—come around; and Delia's other daughter (the excellent Merritt Weaver), from a second marriage, comes to understand both her mother and her own intellectual future. The novel "Cavedweller" tells a rich story whose psychological confusions the stage production doesn't begin to know how to approach. Everything here remains resolutely on the surface; no corner of the soul is left untidy or in doubt. What begins as the story of an emotional mess ends up a theatrical one. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

SEX AND THE SIXTIES GIRL

"Down with Love" and "A Woman Is a Woman."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The opening credits of "Down with Love" are a thing of beauty, but then opening credits have become the best reason to make it to the movies on time. For pure visual snap, there has been nothing in the past year to match the credits of "Monsters, Inc." and, especially, "Catch Me If You Can," and the new film conjures the same tricks: scrambled alphabets, sharply tilted lines, and a color scheme founded strictly on the concept of the Jelly Belly. For the ensuing movie, it's a tough act to follow.

"Down with Love" is a headlong exercise in retro style, and you could argue that the variety of pinks on show, from raging to dusty, indicate a movie blushing at its own presumption. Certainly, the sight of Renée Zellweger in the first scene suggests not so much a character as a powder puff with legs at the bottom and a smile at the other end. The city is New York, the year is 1962, and the story line is about as substantial as an anchovy. Zellweger plays Barbara Novak, who arrives in town to promote her first book, "Down with Love," whose thesis is that women must learn to think, act, and—perish the thought—make love with the time-saving practicality of men.

Her opponent is Catcher Block (Ewan McGregor)—"ladies' man, man's man, man about town," as the saying goes, and a star writer at *Know* magazine. His bachelor pad looks like the bunker of a Bond villain, although what interested me was the mini-apartment that he also appears to maintain at the magazine's offices—somewhere to pour himself a drink and change his shirt. An *excellent* idea. His editor is played by David Hyde Pierce, who gives a master class in line delivery. "The best thing I have to offer a woman is the best thing you have to offer a woman: you," he says to Catcher, stretching those final vowels into an adoring croon. Catcher is asked to profile Barbara, but he has a better idea: he pretends to be a clean-living astronaut, recently back from space, who will find the heart of the sex-only career girl and steal it.

The film was made by Peyton Reed—a perfect period name for a director, although he hasn't decided whether the charms of his chosen period are there to be resurrected or spoofed. If Austin Powers shagged his way through a wormhole in the space-time continuum and landed in "Far from Heaven," this would be the result. There is no shame in watching "Down with Love" for the clothes alone. Just wait for Barbara and *her* editor (Sarah Paulson) to enter a restaurant and slip out of their coats: houndstooth check over a yellow dress for one, yellow over houndstooth for the other. I am worryingly addicted to this scene, and my only hope of recovery is to stay home with a stack of beers and the collected works of Vin Diesel. But there are other occasions when Reed bends the rules and gives the sixties habits a knowing tweak. The heaviest laugh in "Down with Love" is also the dirtiest, as the old split-screen device—used for him-and-her phone conversations—becomes an erotic bind, with Zellweger craning forward in one half of the frame and McGregor, fresh from the shower, eagerly towelling himself in the other, until her face is mashed against his midriff.

Renée Zellweger and Ewan McGregor go retro.

ERIC PALMA

We are a long way from Doris Day, whose sphere of operations did not extend below the equator—barely below the neck, in fact, which is why the title "Pillow Talk" remains her truest legacy. "Down with Love" yearns to give us the time of Day, as it were, without pausing to reflect just how securely she was locked in that era. She was the first lady of sexless sex, who managed to bestride the world with her legs crossed, and with the throb of unfakable passion in her throat when she burst—really burst—into song, and it isn't fair to expect the generous, bracing spirit of her comedy to survive in the corrupted air of today. Zellweger plays it gamely, and so does McGregor, who has perfected a superb skirt chaser's walk—shoulders swivelling, a mixture of lunge and lounge. But both of them are set adrift by the movie's discomforting demands, and only in the closing credits (this really is a top-and-tail movie) do they get to do what people do most fruitfully instead of sex, which is to make a song and dance about it. Who needs love?

By a nice coincidence, something similar is under way downtown. "A Woman Is a Woman" is now being shown at Film Forum in a restored print. That a movie directed by Jean-Luc Godard should well up in a stream of pleasure will mystify those who have followed the output of his later years. In truth, he would never recover (or would choose to outgrow) the larkiness of this picture—his first in color, and the closest that he stepped to the brink of a musical.

The woman in question is Angela (Anna Karina), a part-time stripper who lives in Paris with her lover, Émile (Jean-Claude Brialy). She is, to an intoxicating degree, the definition of a free spirit, although the plot turns on her desire not just to conceive a child but to conceive a child *right now*. And, if Émile refuses to come up with the goods, she will call upon the chivalrous services of his best friend, Alfred (Jean-Paul Belmondo). From the audience's viewpoint, there is no contest: Émile is a dry stick in a hat, whose idea of a jape is to ride his bicycle around the apartment. Whereas Alfred (his surname is Lubitsch, in case we don't get the point)—well, Alfred is Belmondo, which means that he is sexy and simian, sitting Angela down in a bar with an industrial-sized bottle of Dubonnet and a moaning Charles Aznavour on the jukebox.

A double shot of history is on offer here. First, there is the vertiginous realization that more than forty years have passed since "A Woman Is a Woman" won the Jury Prize at the Berlin Film Festival for "originality, youth, audacity, impertinence." (When did you last see a movie that might warrant such an award? "Trainspotting," maybe, in the days when Ewan McGregor wore a buzz cut instead of a suit?) Second, the Paris revealed by Godard was then on the cusp. Its bars and markets, its neighborly grace (Émile and Angela live next to a happy hooker), seem barely altered since the days of René Clair, but then, as if in a tense preview of Godards to come, two nameless policemen knock on the door and browse the apartment for terrorists.

The film looks back without anger on everything that Godard, the majestic anticapitalist, once loved about America. "I'd like to be in a musical with Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly," Angela declares. "Choreography by Bob Fosse," she adds, whereupon she and Alfred strike dancelike poses, yearning to emulate their screen gods and falling comically short. Angela is forever on the move, sticking her bottom out and whistling at herself in the mirror, and the soundtrack keeps rousing itself for what appears to be—what surely must be—a song. No such luck; as in "Down with Love," we are in the infuriating presence of musical foreplay. (When Angela does chant a short number in the night club, she sounds flat and lonely, bereft of brass and strings.) "A Woman Is a Woman" is a tribute to the Hollywood showstopper, paid by somebody who regrets to inform us that the show of modern life will not stop long enough for us to sing. Does that make Godard an emotional realist, or do we sense the stirrings of a killjoy?

If we grant him the benefit of the doubt, it is because of Anna Karina—Godard's muse, his girlfriend, then his wife, and arguably the best thing that ever happened to him or his art. For those who like to locate Godard's vision of the world in the cold recesses of the cerebellum, Karina—Danish by birth—delivers the proof, in pictures such as "Vivre Sa Vie," "Alphaville," and above all "Pierrot le Fou," that he can be equally at home on the lips and the fingertips, and even in the heart. Whether Karina is a great actress is beside the point; as she flutters her dark-rimmed eyes or puts a scandalized palm to her cheek, she could be a starlet from the era of early silents, testing the limits of a new medium. But she holds the camera's attention without strain or scheming, and, in her beret, her white-fur collar, and her patriotic changes of stocking—now red, now blue—she effortlessly tugs us along with her racing moods. In her finest moment, we see her pause at the stove, toss a frying egg so that it sticks to the ceiling, leave the room to answer the phone, say "Just a second," return to the kitchen in time to catch the egg as it peels away and flops back into the pan, then dish it out and eat it while she picks up the receiver and resumes the conversation—with a man, incidentally, to whom she will very soon make love. Delicious. ♦

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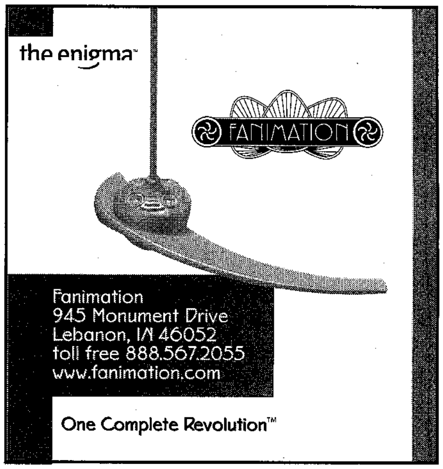
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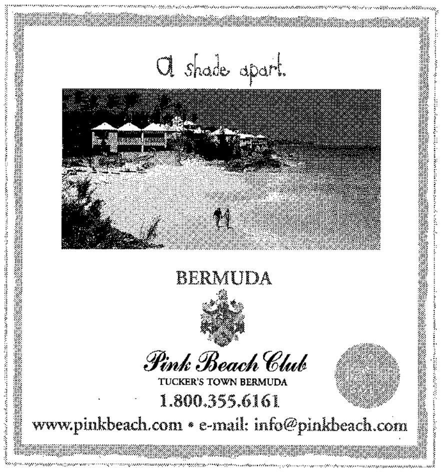
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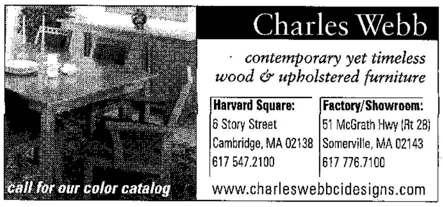
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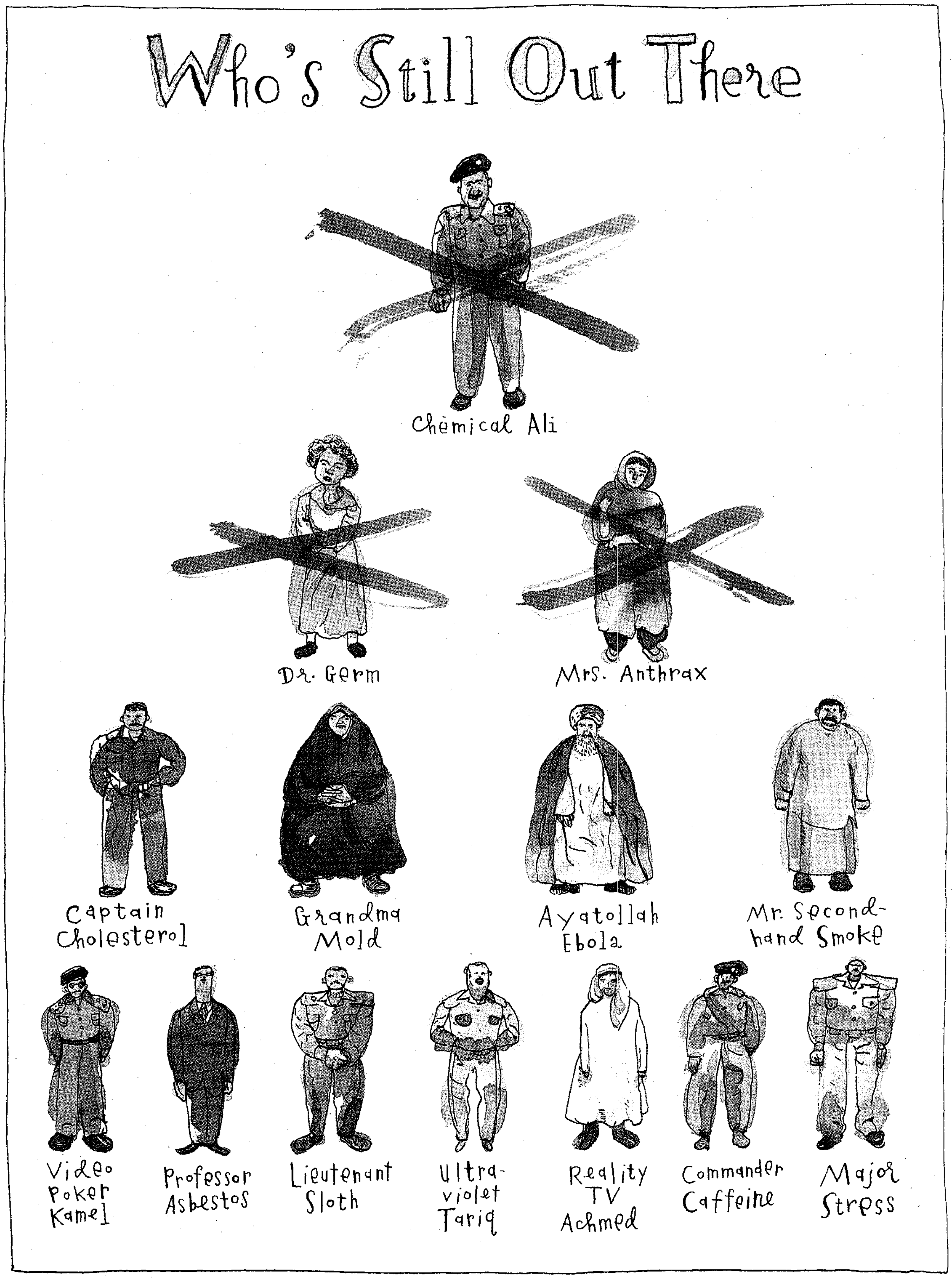
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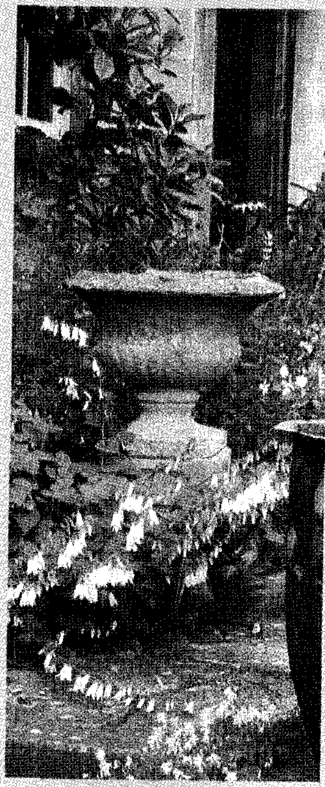

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